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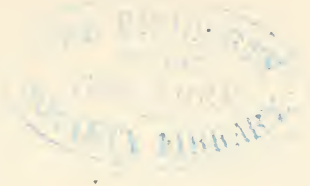
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"Suddenly a new sound reached her ear."

A Bookful of Girls

By

Anna Fuller

Author of "Pratt Portraits," "Katherine Day," etc.

Illustrated

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press
1905

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TO

S. E. R.

THE YOUNGEST OF ALL MY FRIENDS

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Blythe Halliday's Voyage

CHAPTER I

THE CROW'S NEST

"YOU never told me how you happened to name her Blythe."

The two old friends, Mr. John DeWitt and Mrs. Halliday, were reclining side by side in their steamer-chairs, lulled into a quiescent mood by the gentle, scarcely perceptible, motion of the vessel. It was an exertion to speak, and Mrs. Halliday replied evasively, "Do you like the name?"

"For Blythe,—yes. But I don't know another girl who could carry it off so well. Tell me how it happened."

Then Blythe's mother reluctantly gathered herself together for a serious effort, and said: "It was the old Scotch nurse who did it. She called her 'a blythe lassie' before she was three days old. We had

been hesitating between Lucretia for Charles's mother and Hannah for mine, and we compromised on Blythe!"

Upon which the speaker, allowing her eyes to close definitively, took on the appearance of gentle inanition which characterised nine-tenths of her fellow-voyagers, ranged side by side in their steamer-chairs along the deck.

They had passed the Azores, that lovely May morning, and were headed for Cape St. Vincent, — the good old *Lorelei* lounging along at her easiest gait, the which is also her rapidest. For there is nothing more deceptive than a steamer's behaviour on a calm day when the sea offers no perceptible resistance to the keel.

Here and there an insatiable novel-reader held a paper-covered volume before his nose, but more often the book had slid to the deck, to be picked up by Gustav, the prince of deck-stewards, and carefully tucked in among the wraps of the unconscious owner.

Just now, however, Gustav was enjoy-

ing a moment of unaccustomed respite from activity, for his most exacting beneficiaries were not sufficiently awake to demand a service of him. He had administered *bouillon* and lemonade and cracked ice by the gallon ; he had scattered sandwiches and ginger cookies broadcast among them ; he had tenderly inquired of the invalids, "'Ow you feel?" and had cheerfully pronounced them, one and all, to be "mush besser" ; and now he himself was, for a fleeting moment, the centre of interest in the one tiny eddy of animation on the whole length of the deck.

Just aft of the awning, in the full sunshine, he was engaged in "posing," with the sheepish air of a person having his photograph taken, while a fresh, comely girl of sixteen stood, kodak in hand, waiting for his attitude to relax. Half a dozen spectators, elderly men and small boys, stood about making facetious remarks, but Gustav and his youthful "operator" were too much in earnest to pay them much heed.

Blythe Halliday was usually very much

in earnest; by which is not to be inferred that she was of an alarmingly serious cast of mind. Her earnestness took the form of intense satisfaction in the matter in hand, whatever that might be, and she had found life a succession of delightful experiences, of which this one of an ocean voyage was perhaps the most delectable of all.

In one particular Blythe totally disagreed with her mother; for Mrs. Halliday had declared, on one of the first universally unbecoming days of the voyage, that it was a mystery how all the agreeable people got to Europe, since so few of them were ever to be discovered on an ocean steamer! Whereas Blythe, for her part, had never dreamed that there were so many interesting persons in the world as were to be discovered among their fellow-voyagers.

Was not the big, bluff Captain himself, with his unfathomable sea-craft and his autocratic power, a regular old Viking such as you might read of in your history books, but would hardly expect to meet with in the flesh? And was there not

a real Italian Count, elderly but impressive, who had dealings with no one but his valet, the latter being a nimble personage with a wicked eye who seemed to possess the faculty of starting up through the deck as if summoned by a species of wireless telegraphy? Best of all, was not Blythe's opposite neighbour at the Captain's table a shaggy, keen-eyed Englishman, figuring on the passenger-list as "Mr. Grey," but who was generally believed to be no less a personage than Hugh Dalton, the famous poet, travelling incognito?

This latter gentleman was more approachable than the Count, and had taken occasion to tell Blythe some very wonderful tales, besides still further endearing himself to her by listening with flattering attention to such narratives as she was pleased to relate for his benefit. Indeed, they were rapidly becoming fast friends and she was seriously contemplating a snap-shot at his expense.

Mr. Grey, meanwhile, had joined the group in the sunshine, where he stood,

pipe in mouth, with his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his reefer, regarding Gustav's awkwardness with kindly amusement.

"There they go, those energetic young persons!" Mr. De Witt observed, a few minutes later, as Blythe and the Englishman walked past, in search of the Captain, whom Mr. Grey had suggested as the next subject for photographic prowess. "Do you suppose that really is Dalton?"

Mr. De Witt spoke with entire disregard of the fact that Mrs. Halliday appeared to be slumbering tranquilly. And indeed an interrupted nap is so easily made good on shipboard that Blythe used sometimes to beg her mother to try and "fall awake" for a minute!

On this occasion, as she walked past with the alleged poet, she remarked: "Even Mr. De Witt can't keep Mamma awake on shipboard, and she is n't a bit of a sleepy person on dry land."

By way of response, Mr. Grey turned to contemplate the line of steamer-chairs, billowy with voluminous wraps, saying:

"Does n't the deck look like a sea becalmed? See! Those are the waves, too lazy to break!"

"How funny the ocean would look if the waves forgot to turn over!" Blythe exclaimed, glancing across the gently undulating surface of the sea. "I don't suppose they 've kept still one single instant in millions of years!"

"Not since the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," her companion returned, with quiet emphasis ; and Blythe felt surer than ever that he really was the great poet whom people believed him to be.

A moment later they had stormed the bridge, where they two, of all the ship's company, were pretty sure of a welcome. They found the Captain standing, with his sextant at his eye, the four gold stripes on his sleeve gleaming gaily in the sunshine. Evidently things were going right, for the visitors and their daring proposal were most graciously received.

The fine old sea-dog stood like a man to be shot at ; and as Blythe faced him,

kodak in hand, the breeze playing pranks with her hair and blowing her golf-cape straight back from her shoulders, it was all so exhilarating that before she knew it she had turned her little camera upon the supposed Hugh Dalton himself, who made an absurd grimace and told her to "let her go!"

It was always a delightful experience for Blythe to stand on the bridge and watch the ship's officers at their wonderful work of guiding the great sea-monster across the pathless deep. Here was the brain of the ship, as Mr. Grey had once pointed out, and to-day, when a sailor suddenly appeared above the gangway and, touching his hat, received a curt order,—"That is one of the nerves of the vessel," her companion said. "It carries the message of the brain to the furthest parts of the body."

"And I suppose the eyes are up there," Blythe returned, glancing at the "crow's nest," half-way up the great forward mast, where the two lookouts were keeping their steady watch.

"Yes," he rejoined, "that must be why they always have a pair of them,—so as to get a proper focus. *Nicht wahr, Herr Capitän?*"

And the little fiction was explained to the Captain, who grew more genial than ever under the stimulus of such agreeable conversation.

"*Ja wohl!*" he agreed, heartily; "*Ja wohl!*"—which was really quite an outburst of eloquence for Captain Seemann.

"If I could n't be captain," Blythe announced, "I think I should choose to be lookout."

"How is dat?" the Captain inquired.

"It must be the best place of all, away up above everything and everybody."

"And you would like to go up dare?"

"Of course I should!"

"And you would not be afraid?"

"Not I!"

Upon which the Captain, in high good-humour, declared, "I belief you!"

After that he fell to speaking German with Mr. Grey, and Blythe moved to the end of the bridge, and stood looking down

upon the steerage passengers, where they were disporting themselves in the sun on the lower deck.

They were a motley crew, and she never tired of watching them, as they sat about in picturesque groups, singing or playing games, or lay stretched on the deck, fast asleep.

Somewhat apart from the others was a woman with a little girl whom Blythe had not before observed. The child lay on a bright shawl, her head against the woman's knee, her dark Italian eyes gazing straight up into the luminous blue of the sky. There was a curiously high-bred look in the pale features, young and unformed as they were, and Blythe wondered how such a child as that came to belong to the stout, middle-aged woman who did not herself seem altogether out of place in the rough steerage.

At this point in her meditations, a quiet, matter-of-fact voice struck her ear, and, turning, she found that Mr. Grey had come up behind her.

"The Captain says he will have the

'crow's nest' lowered and let you go up in it if you like," was the startling announcement which roused her from her revery.

"Oh, you are making fun!" she protested.

"I don't wonder you think so, but he seems quite in earnest, and I can tell you it 's the chance of a lifetime!"

"I should think it was!" she gasped. "Oh, tell him he 's an angel with wings! And please, *please* don't let him change his mind while I run and ask Mamma!" With which Blythe vanished down the gangway, her golf-cape rising straight up around her head as the draught took it.

We may well believe that such a prospect as that drove from her mind all speculations as to the steerage passengers, and that even the thought of the little girl with the wonderful eyes did not again visit her in the few hours intervening.

Yet when, that afternoon at eight-bells, she passed with Mr. Grey down the steep gangway to the steerage deck, which they were obliged to traverse on their way to the forecastle, and they came upon the little

creature lying, with upturned face, against the woman's knee, Blythe felt a sharp pang of compunction and pity. The child looked even more pathetic than when seen from above, and the young girl involuntarily stooped in passing, and touched the wan little cheek. Whereupon one of those ineffable smiles which are the birthright of Italians lighted the little face, and the small hand was lifted with so captivating a gesture that Blythe, clasping it in her own, dropped on her knees beside the child.

"Is it your little girl?" she asked, looking up into the face of the woman, whose marked unlikeness to the child was answer enough.

"No, no, Signorina," the woman protested. "She is my little Signorina."

"And you are taking her to Italy?"

"*Si, Signorina; alla bella Italia!*"

Then the lips of the little girl parted with a still more radiant smile, and she murmured, "*Alla bella Italia!*"

A moment later, Blythe and her companion had passed on and up to the for-

ward deck where, climbing a short ladder to the railing of the "crow's nest," they dropped lightly down into this most novel of elevators. There was a shrill whistle from the boatswain, the waving of white handkerchiefs where Mrs. Halliday and Mr. DeWitt stood, forward of the wheel-house, to watch the start; then the big windlass began to turn, the rope was "paid out," and the slow, rather creaky journey up the mast had begun.

It was a perfect day for the adventure. The ship was not rolling at all, the little motion to be felt being a gentle tilt from stem to stern which manifested itself at long intervals in the slightest imaginable dip of the prow. And presently the ascent was accomplished, and the "crow's nest" once more clung in its accustomed place against the mast,—forty feet up in the air, according to Mr. Grey's reckoning.

As they looked across the great sea the horizon seemed to have receded to an incalculable distance, and the airs that came to them across that broad expanse, unsullied by the faintest trace of man or his

works, were purer than are often vouchsafed to mortals. Blythe felt her heart grow big with the sense of space and purity, and this wonderful swift passage through the upper air. Involuntarily she took off her hat to get the full sweep of the breeze upon her forehead.

Suddenly, a new sound reached her ear,—a small, remote, confidential kind of voice, that seemed to arrive from nowhere in particular.

"It 's the Captain, hailing us through his megaphone," her companion remarked; and, glancing down, far down, in the direction of the bridge, Blythe beheld the Captain, looking curiously attenuated in the unusual perspective, standing with a gigantic object resembling a cornucopia raised to his lips.

"You like it vare you are?" quoth the uncanny voice, not loud, but startlingly near.

And Blythe nodded her head and waved her hat in vigorous assent.

The great ship stretched long and narrow astern, the main deck shut in with

awnings through which the huge smoke-stacks rose, and the wide-mouthed ventilators crooked their necks. Along either outer edge of the awnings a line of life-boats showed, tied fast in their high-springing davits, while from the mouth of the yellow ship's-funnels black masses of smoke floated slowly and heavily astern. The *Lorelei* swam the water like a wonderful white aquatic bird, leaving upon the quiet sea a long snowy track of foam.

On a line with their lofty perch a sailor swung spider-like among the network of sheets and halyards that clung about the mainmast, its meshes clearly defined against the pure blue of the sky, while below there, on the bridge, the big brass nautical instruments gleamed, and the caps of the Captain and his lieutenants showed white in the sun. As Blythe glanced down and away from this stirring outlook, she could just distinguish among the dark figures of the steerage the small white face of the child upturned toward the sky; and again a sharp pang took her, a feeling that the little creature did not

belong among those rough men and women. No wonder that the beautiful Italian eyes always sought the sky; it was their only refuge from sordid sights.

"I suppose the woman meant that the child was her little mistress; did she not?" Blythe asked abruptly.

"That was what I understood."

"It's probably a romance; don't you think so?" and Blythe felt that she was applying to a high authority for information on such a head.

"Looks like it," the great authority opined. "I think we shall have to investigate the case."

"Oh, will you? And you speak Italian so beautifully!"

"How do you know that?"

"Oh, I'm sure of it! It sounds so exactly like the hand-organ men!"

"Look here, Miss Blythe," the poet protested, "you must not flatter a modest man like that. My daughter would say you were turning my head."

"Oh, I rather think your daughter knows that it's not the kind of head to

be turned," Blythe answered easily. She was beginning to feel as if she had known this famous personage all her life.

"I shall tell her that," said he.

Presently one-bell sounded a faint tinkle far below, and the big megaphone inquired whether they wanted to come down, and was assured that they did not. And all the while during their voyage through the air, which was prolonged for another half-hour, the two good comrades were weaving romances about the little girl; and with a curious confidence, as if, forsooth, they could conjure up what fortunes they would out of that vast horizon toward which the good ship was bearing them on.

At last the time came for them to go below, and they reluctantly signalled to the sailors, grouped about the deck in patient expectation. Upon which the windlass was set going, and slowly and creakingly the "crow's nest" was lowered from its airy height.

The two aëronauts found the steerage still populous with queer figures, and the

atmosphere seemed more unsavoury than ever after their sojourn among the upper airs. To their disappointment, however, the woman and her Signorina were nowhere to be seen. Blythe and Mr. Grey looked for them in every corner of the deck, but no trace of them was to be found, and Blythe mounted the gangway to their own deck with much of the reluctance which she often felt in submitting to an interruption in a serial story.

They found Mrs. Halliday amusing herself with a glass of cracked ice, giving casual attention the while to a very long story told by a garrulous fellow-passenger in a wadded hood.

"Oh, Mamma," Blythe cried, perching upon the extension foot of her mother's chair, "why did n't you and Mr. DeWitt stay longer? And how did it happen that nobody else got wind of it? I don't believe a single person knows what we 've been about! And oh! we have had such a glorious time! It was like being a bird! Only that little girl in the steerage ought n't to be there, and Mr. Grey and I are

going to see what can be done about it, and——"

The wadded hood had fallen silent, and now its wearer rose, with an air of resignation, and carried her tale to another listener, while Mr. Grey also moved away, leaving Blythe to tell her own story.

They were great friends, Mrs. Halliday and this only child of hers, and well they might be; for, as Blythe had informed Mr. Grey early in their acquaintance; "Mamma and I are all there are of us."

As she sat beside this best of friends,—having dropped into the chair left vacant by the wadded hood,—Blythe lived over again every experience and sensation of that eventful afternoon, and with the delightful sense of sharing it with somebody who understood. And, since the most abiding impression of all had been her solicitude for the little steerage passenger, she found no difficulty in arousing her mother to an almost equal interest in the child's fate.

And presently, when the cornet player passed them, with the air of short-lived

importance which comes to a ship's cornet three times a day, and, stationing himself well aft, played the cheerful little tune which heralds the approaching dinner-hour, Blythe slipped her hand into her mother's and said:

"We 'll do something about that little girl; won't us, Mumsey?"

Upon which Mrs. Halliday, rising, and patting the rosy cheek which she used to call the "apple of her eye," said:

"I should n't wonder if us did, Blythe."

CHAPTER II

THE LITTLE SIGNORINA

BLYTHE lay awake a long time that night, thinking, not of the bridge nor of the "crow's nest," not of the Captain nor of the supposed Hugh Dalton, but of the child in the steerage. How stifling it must be down there to-night! It was hot and airless enough here, where Blythe had a stateroom to herself,—separated from her mother's by a narrow passage-way, and where the port-holes had been open all day. Now, to be sure, they were closed; for the sea was rising, and already the spray dashed against the thick glass. Oh, how must it be in the steerage! And how did it happen that that nice woman had been obliged to take her little Signorina in such squalid fashion to *la bella Italia?*

Blythe fell asleep with the sound of creaking timbers in her ears, as the good ship strained against the rising sea, and when the clear note of the cornet, playing the morning hymn, roused her from her dreams, the roaring of wind and waves sent her thoughts with a shock of pity to the little steerage passenger shut up below. For with such a sea as this the waves must be sweeping the lower deck, and there could be no release for the poor little prisoner.

"Vhy you not report that veather from the lookout?" the Captain asked with mock severity as Blythe appeared at the breakfast table.

The racks were on, and the knives and forks had begun their time-honoured minuet within their funny little fences. The amateur "lookout" glanced across the table at her friend and ally the poet, who nodded encouragingly as she answered:

"Oh, we knew the Captain knew all about it!"

"You think de Capitän know pretty much eferything, *wie es scheint!*" was the

reply, uttered in so deep a guttural that Blythe knew the old Viking did not take very seriously the "bit of weather" that seemed to her so violent. In fact, he owned as much before he had finished his second cup of coffee.

Yet when she came up the companion-way after breakfast, she found a stout rope stretched across the deck from stanchion to stanchion to hold on by, the steamer chairs all tied fast to the rail that runs around the deckhouse, and every preparation made for rough weather.

It was not what a sailor would have called a storm, but the sea was changed enough from the smiling calm of yesterday. Not many passengers were on deck, half a dozen, only, reclining in their chairs in the lee of the deckhouse, close reefed in their heavy wraps; while here and there a pair of indefatigable promenaders lurched and slid along the heaving deck arm in arm, or clung to any chance support in a desperate effort to keep their footing.

Blythe had to buffet her way lustily as

she turned a corner to windward. Holding her golf-cape close about her and jamming her felt hat well down on her head, she made her way to the narrow passageway forward of the wheel-house where one looks down into the steerage. The waves were dashing across the deck, which was deserted excepting for one or two dark-browed men crouched under shelter of the forecastle.

There was a light, drizzling rain, and now and then the spray struck against her face. Blythe looked up at the "crow's nest," which was describing strange geometrical figures against the sky. The lookouts in their oil-coats did not seem in the least to mind their erratic passage through space. She wished it were eight-bells and time for them to change watch; it was always such fun to see them running up the ladder, hand over hand, their quick, monkey-like figures silhouetted against the sky.

How nobly the great ship forged ahead against an angry sea, climbing now to the crest of a big wave, and giving a long,

shuddering shake of determination before plunging down into a black, swirling hollow! And how the wind and the waters bellowed together!

The Captain was on the bridge in his rubber coat and sou'-wester. He had said this would not last long, and he had stopped for a second cup of coffee before leaving the table. All the same, Blythe would not have ventured to accost him now, even if he had passed her way.

Presently she returned under shelter of the awning and let Gustav tuck her up in her chair to dry off. And Mr. De Witt came and sat down beside her and instructed her in the delectable game of "Buried Cities," in which she became speedily so proficient that, taking her cue from the lettering on one of the lifeboats, she discovered the city of Bremen lying "buried" in "the som*bre men*ace of the sea!"

After a while, Gustav appeared before them, bearing a huge tray of *bouillon* and sandwiches, with which he was striking the most eccentric angles; and Blythe

discovered that she was preposterously hungry. And while her nose was still buried in her cup, she espied over its rim a pair of legs planted well apart, in the cause of equilibrium, and the big, pleasant voice of Mr. Grey made itself heard above wind and sea, saying, "Guess where I 've been."

"In the smoking-room," was the prompt reply.

"Guess again."

"On the bridge,—only you would n't dare!"

"Once more."

"Oh, I know," Blythe cried, setting her thick cup down on the deck, and tumbling off her chair in a snarl of steamer-rugs; "You 've been down in the steerage finding out about the little Signorina!"

"Who told you?"

"You did! You looked so pleased with yourself! Oh, do tell me all about her!"

"Well, I 've had a long talk with the woman. Shall we walk up and down?"

And off they went, with that absence of ceremony which characterises life on

shipboard, leaving Mr. DeWitt to bury his cities all unaided and unapplauded. Then, as the two walked up and down,—literally up and down, for the ship was pitching a bit, and sometimes they were labouring up-hill, and sometimes they were running down a steep incline,—as they walked up and down Mr. Grey told his story.

The woman, Giuditta, had confided to him all she knew, and he had surmised more. Giuditta had known the family only since the time, three years ago, when she had been called in to take care of the little Cecilia during the illness of the Signora. The father had been a handsome good-for-nothing, who had got shot in a street row in that quarter of New York known as "Little Italy." He was nothing,—*niente, niente;*—but the Signora! Oh, if the gentleman could but have known the Signora, so beautiful, so patient, so sad! Giuditta had stayed with her and shared her fortunes, which were all, alas! misfortunes,—and had nursed her through a long decline. But never

a word had she told of her own origin,—the beautiful Signora,—nor had her father's name ever passed her lips. Had she known that she was dying, perhaps then, for the child's sake, she might have forgotten her pride. But she was always thinking she should get well,—and then, one day, she died!

There was very little left,—only a few dollars; but among the squalid properties of the pitiful little stage where the poor young thing had enacted the last act of her tragedy, was one picture, a *Madonna*, with the painter's name, G. Bellini, just decipherable. It was a little picture, twelve inches by sixteen, in a dingy old frame, and not a pretty picture at that. But a kind man, a dealer in antiquities, had given Giuditta one hundred dollars for it. "Think of that, Signore! One hundred dollars for an ugly little black picture no bigger than that!"

"I suppose," Mr. Grey remarked, as they stood balancing themselves at an angle of many degrees,—"I suppose that the picture was genuine,—else the man

would hardly have paid one hundred dollars for it."

"And would it be worth more than that?"

"A trifle," he replied, rather grimly. "Somewhere among the thousands."

"But why should they have kept such a picture when they were so poor? Why did n't they sell it?"

"That would hardly have occurred to them. It was evidently a family heirloom that the girl had taken with her because she loved it. I doubt if she guessed its value. A Bellini! A Giovanni Bellini, in a New York tenement house! Think of it! And now I suppose some millionaire has got it. Likely enough somebody who does n't know enough to buy his own pictures! Horrible idea! Horrible!" and Mr. Grey strode along, all but snorting with rage at the thought.

"But tell me more about the little girl," Blythe entreated, wishing the wind would n't blow her words out of her mouth so rudely. "Her name is Cecilia, you say?"

"Yes; Cecilia. Dopo is the name they went by, but the nurse does n't think it genuine. Her idea is that her Signora was the daughter of some great family, and got herself disowned by marrying an opera singer who subsequently made a fiasco and dropped his name with his fame. She does n't think Dopo ever was a family name. It means 'after,' you know, and they may have adopted it for its ironical significance."

"And the poor lady died and never told!" Blythe panted, as they toiled painfully up-hill with the rain beating in their faces.

"Yes, and—look out! hold tight!" for suddenly the slant of the deck was reversed, and they came coasting down to an impromptu seat on a bench.

"It seems," Mr. Grey went on, when they had resumed their somewhat arduous promenade,—"it seems the woman, Giuditta, is quite alone in the world and has been longing to get back to Italy. So she easily persuaded herself that she could find the child's family and establish her in

high life. Giuditta has an uncommonly high idea of high life," he added. "I think she imagines that somebody in a court train and a coronet will come to meet her Signorina at the pier in Genoa. Poor things! There 'll be a rude awakening!"

"But we won't let it be rude!" Blythe protested. "We must do something about it. Can't you think of anything to do?"

They were standing now, clinging to the friendly rope stretched across the deck, shoulder high.

"Giuditta's plan," Mr. Grey replied, "is the naïve one of appealing to the Queen about it. And, seriously, I think it may be worth while to ask the American Minister to make inquiries. For there is, of course, a bare chance that the family may be known at Court. In the meantime——"

"In the meantime," Blythe interposed, "we 've got to get her out of the steerage!"

"But how?"

"Oh, Mamma will arrange that. We 'll just make a cabin passenger of her, and I

can take her in with me in my stateroom. Oh! how happy she will be, lying in my steamer chair, with that dear Gustav to wait on her! I must go down at once and get Mamma to say yes!"

"And you think she will?"

"I know she will! She is always doing nice things. If you really knew her you would n't doubt it!" And with that the young optimist vanished in her accustomed whirl of golf-cape.

If faith can move mountains, it is perhaps no wonder that the implicit and energetic faith of which Blythe Halliday was possessed proved equal to the removal of a small child from one quarter to another of the big ship. The three persons concerned in bringing about the change were easily won over; for Mrs. Halliday was quite of Blythe's mind in the matter, Mr. Grey had little difficulty in bringing the Captain to their point of view, while, as for Giuditta, she hailed the event as the first step in the transformation of her small Signorina into the little "great lady" she was born to be.

Accordingly, close upon luncheon time, when the sun was just breaking through the clouds, and the sea, true to the Captain's prediction, was already beginning to subside, the tiny Signorina was carried, in the strong arms of Gustav, up the steep gangway by the wheel-house, where Blythe and her mother, Mr. DeWitt and the poet, to say nothing of Captain Seemann himself, formed an impromptu reception committee for her little ladyship.

As the child was set on her feet at the head of the gangway, she turned to throw a kiss down upon her faithful Giuditta, and then, without the slightest hesitation, she placed her hand in Blythe's, and walked away with her.

That evening there was a dance on board the *Lorelei;* for it had been but the fringe of a storm which they had crossed, and the sea was again taking on its long, easy swell.

The deck presented a festal appearance for the occasion. Rows of Japanese lanterns were strung from side to side against the white background of awning and deck-

house, and the flags of many nations lent their gay colours to the pretty scene. The ship's orchestra was in its element, playing with a "go" and rhythm which seemed caught from the pulsing movement of the ship itself.

As Blythe, with Mr. DeWitt, who had been a famous dancer in his day, led off the Virginia Reel, she wondered how it would strike the sailors of a passing brig, —this gay apparition of light and music, riding the great, dark, solemn sea.

The dance itself was rather a staid, middle-aged affair, for Blythe was the only young girl on board, and none but the youngest or the surest-footed could put much spirit into a dance where the law of gravitation was apparently changing base from moment to moment. Blythe and her partner, however, took little account of the moving floor beneath their feet, or the hesitating demeanour of their companions. One after another, even the most reluctant and self-distrustful of the revellers found themselves caught up into active participation in the figure.

In a quiet corner of the deck sat Mrs. Halliday, with little Cecilia beside her, snugly stowed away in a nest of steamer-rugs; for they could not bear to take her below, out of the fresh, invigorating air. Their little guest spoke hardly any English, but, although Mrs. Halliday was under the impression that she herself spoke Italian, the child seemed more conversable in Blythe's company than in that of any one else, not excepting Mr. Grey, about whose linguistic accomplishments there could be no question.

Accordingly when, the Virginia Reel being finished, Blythe came and sat on the foot of the little girl's chair, they fell into an animated conversation, each in her own tongue. And presently, during a pause in the music, the Italian Count chanced to pass their way, and, stopping in his solitary promenade, appeared to give ear to their talk.

Suddenly he stooped, and, looking into the animated face of the child, inquired in his own tongue; "What is thy name, little one?"

But when the pure, liquid, childish voice answered "Cecilia Dopo," he merely lifted his hat and, bowing ceremoniously, passed on.

Mr. Grey, who had watched the little scene from a distance, joined the group a moment later and, taking a vacant chair beside Mrs. Halliday, remarked:

"I think we shall have to cultivate the old gentleman. He might be induced to lend a hand in behalf of this young person. They are both Florentines," he added, thoughtfully, "and Florentine society is not large."

"Then you really believe the nurse is right about the child?" Mrs. Halliday asked.

"Oh, I should n't dare say that the mother was a great lady," he returned; "but there is certainly something high-bred about the little thing."

"They often have that air," Mrs. Halliday demurred,—"even the beggar children."

"Yes; to our eyes. But, do you know, I rather think the Italians themselves can

tell the difference. I would rather trust Giuditta's judgment than my own. Besides," he added, after a long pause, during which he had been watching the expressive face of the child. "Besides,—there's that Giovanni Bellini. That sort of thing doesn't often stray into low society."

At this juncture the tall Italian moved again into their neighbourhood, and stood, at a point where the awning had been drawn back, gazing, with a preoccupied air, out to sea.

Rising from his seat, Mr. Grey approached him, remarking abruptly, and with a jerk of the head toward Cecilia, "Florentine, is she not?"

"*Sicuro*," was the grave reply; upon which the Count moved away, to be seen no more that evening.

As the Englishman rejoined them after this laconic interview, Blythe greeted him with a new theory.

"Do you know," she said, "I used to think the Count was haughty and disagreeable, but I have changed my mind."

"That only shows how susceptible you good Republicans are to any sign of attention from the nobility," was the teasing reply.

"Perhaps you are right," Blythe returned, with the fair-mindedness which distinguished her. "You know I never saw a titled person before, excepting one red-headed English Lord, who had n't any manners. I 've often thought I should like, of all things, to know a King or Queen really well!"

"You don't say so!" Mr. Grey laughed. "And what 's your opinion now, of the old gentleman, since he deigned to interrupt your conversation?"

"I believe he is unhappy."

"What makes you think so?"

"There 's an unhappy look away back in his eyes. I never looked in before,—and then——"

"And then——?"

"There's something about his voice."

"Yes; Tuscan, you know."

"Oh, is that it? Well, any way, I like him!"

"If that 's the case, perhaps you could make better headway with him than I."

"But I don't speak Italian."

"Perhaps you speak French."

"I know my conjugations," was the modest admission.

"And I 'm sure he would be enchanted to hear them," Mr. Grey laughed, as the orchestra struck into the familiar music of the Lancers, causing him to beat a retreat into the smoking-room.

And while Blythe danced gaily and heartily with a boy somewhat younger than herself, and not quite as tall, her little protégée fell into a deep sleep. And presently, the dance being over, the faithful Gustav carried her down to Blythe's stateroom, where she was snugly tucked away in the gently rocking cradle of the lower berth.

As for Blythe, thus relegated to the upper berth, she entered promptly into an agreeable dreamland, where she found herself speaking Italian fluently, and where she discovered, to her extreme satisfaction, that the Queen of Italy was her bosom friend!

CHAPTER III

A NEW DAWN

IT was pretty to see the little Signorina revive under the favouring influences of prosperity; and indeed the soft airs of the southern seas were never sweeter nor more caressing than those which came to console our voyagers for their short-lived storm.

Life was full of interest and excitement for the little girl. The heavy lassitude of her steerage days had fallen from her, and already that first morning a delicate glow of returning vigour touched the little cheek.

"She 's picking up; is n't she?" Mr. DeWitt remarked, as he joined Blythe and the child at the head of the steerage gangway, where the little one was throwing enthusiastic kisses and musical Italian

phrases down upon the hardly less radiant Giuditta.

"Oh, yes!" was the confident reply. "She's a different child since her salt-water bath and her big bowl of oatmeal. Mamma says she really has a splendid physique, only she was smothering down there in the steerage."

Then Mr. DeWitt stooped and, lifting the child, set her on the railing, where she could get a better view of her faithful friend below.

"There! How do you like that?" he inquired.

Upon which the little girl, finding herself unexpectedly on a level with Blythe's face, put up her tiny hand and stroked her cheek.

"Like-a Signorina," she remarked with apparent irrelevance.

"Oh! You do, do you? Well, she's a nice girl."

"Nice-a girl-a," the child repeated, adding a vowel, Italian fashion, to each word.

Then, with an appreciative look into the pleasant, whiskered countenance,

whose owner was holding her so securely on her precarious perch, she pressed her little hand gently against his waistcoat, and gravely remarked, "Nice-a girl-a, *anche il Signore!*"

"So! I'm a nice girl too, am I?" the old gentleman replied, much elated with the compliment.

And Giuditta, down below, perceiving that her Signorina was making new conquests, snatched her bright handkerchief from her head, and waved it gaily; whereupon a score of the steerage passengers, seized with her enthusiasm, waved their hats and handkerchiefs and shouted; "*Buon' viaggio, Signorina! Buon' viaggio!*"

And the little recipient of this ovation became so excited that she almost jumped out of the detaining arms of Mr. DeWitt, who, being of a cautious disposition, made haste to set her down again; upon which they all walked aft, under the big awning.

"She makes friends easily," Mr. Grey remarked, later in the morning, as he and

Blythe paused a moment in their game of ring-toss. The child was standing, clinging to the hand of a tall woman in black, a grave, silent Southerner who had hitherto kept quite to herself.

"Yes," Blythe rejoined, "but she is fastidious. She will listen to no blandishments from any one whom she does n't take a fancy to. That good-natured, talkative Mr. Distel has been trying all day to get her to come to him, but she always gives him the slip." And Blythe, in her preoccupation, proceeded to throw two rings out of three wide of the mark.

"Has the Count taken any more notice of her?" Mr. Grey inquired, deftly tossing the smallest of all the rings over the top of the post.

"Apparently not; but she takes a great deal of notice of him. See, she 's watching him now. I should not be a bit surprised if she were to speak to him of her own accord one of these days."

"There are not many days left," her companion remarked. "The Captain says

we shall make Cape St. Vincent before night."

"Oh, how fast the voyage is going!" Blythe sighed.

Yet, sorry as she would be to have the voyage over, no one was more enchanted than Blythe when Cape St. Vincent rose out of the sea, marking the end of the Atlantic passage. It was just at sundown, and the beautiful headland, bathed in a golden light, stood, like the mystic battlements of a veritable "Castle in Spain," against a luminous sky.

"Mamma," Blythe asked, "did you ever see anything more beautiful than that?"

They were standing at the port railing, with the little girl between them, watching the great cliffs across the deep blue sea.

"Nothing more beautiful than that seen through your eyes, Blythe."

"I believe you do see it through my eyes, Mumsey," Blythe answered, thoughtfully, "just as I am getting to see things through Cecilia's eyes. I never realised before how things open up when you look at them that way."

And Mrs. Halliday smiled a quiet, inward smile that Blythe understood with a new understanding.

They took little Cecilia ashore with them at Gibraltar the next morning, and again Blythe experienced the truth of her new theory.

It was our heroine's first glimpse of Europe, and no delectable detail of their hour's drive, no exotic bloom, no strange Moorish costume, no enchanting vista of cliff or sea, was lost upon her. Yet she felt that even her enthusiasm paled before the deep, speechless ecstasy of the little Cecilia. It was as if, in the tropical glow and fragrant warmth, the child were breathing her native air,—as if she had come to her own.

On their return, as the grimy old tug which had carried them across the harbour came alongside the big steamer, the child suddenly exclaimed, "*Ecco, il Signore!*" and, following the direction of her gesture, their eyes met those of the Count looking down upon them. He instantly moved away, and they had soon

forgotten him, in the pleasurable excitement of bestowing upon Giuditta the huge, hat-shaped basket filled with fruit which they had brought for her.

Later in the day, as they weighed anchor and sailed out from the shadow of the great Rock, Blythe found herself standing with Mr. Grey at the stern-rail of their own deck, watching the face of the mighty cliff as it changed with the varying perspective.

"Oh! I wish I were a poet or an artist or something!" she cried.

"Would you take that monstrous fortress for a subject?" he asked.

"Yes, and I should do something so splendid with it that nobody would dare to be satirical!" and she glanced defiantly at her companion, whose good-humoured countenance was wrinkling with amusement.

"Let us see," he said. "How would this do?" And he gravely repeated the following:

> "There once was a fortress named Gib,
> Whose manners were haughty and—

What rhymes with Gib?"

"Glib!" Blythe cried.

"Good!

Whose manners were haughty and glib.
If you tried to get in,
She replied with a grin,—

Quick! Give me another rhyme for Gib."

"Rib!" Blythe suggested, audaciously.

"Excellent, excellent! Rib! Now, how does it go?

There once was a fortress named Gib,
Whose manners were haughty and glib!
If you tried to get in,
She replied, with a grin,
'I 'm Great Britain's impregnable rib!'

Rather neat! Don't you think?"

"O Mr. Grey!" Blythe cried. "You've got to write that in my voyage-book! It's the——"

At that moment, a gesture from her companion caused her to turn and look behind her. There, only a few feet from where they were standing, but with his back to them, was the Count, sitting on one of the long, stationary benches fast-

ened against the hatchway, while just at his knees stood little Cecilia. She was balancing herself with some difficulty on the gently swaying deck, holding out for his acceptance a small bunch of violets, which one of the market-women at Gibraltar had bestowed upon her.

As he appeared to hesitate: "*Prendili!*" she cried, with pretty wilfulness. Upon which he took the little offering, and lifted it to his face.

The child stood her ground resolutely, and presently, "Put me up!" she commanded, still in her own sweet tongue.

Obediently he lifted her, and placed her beside him on the seat, where she sat clinging with one little hand to the sleeve of his coat to keep from slipping down, with the gentle dip of the vessel.

The two sat, for a few minutes, quite silent, gazing off toward the African coast, and Blythe and her companion drew nearer, filled with curiosity as to the outcome of the interview.

Presently the child looked up into the Count's face and inquired, with the pretty

Tuscan accent which sounded like an echo of his own question on the evening of the dance:

"What is thy name?"

"Giovanni Battista Allamiraviglia."

Cecilia repeated after him the long, musical name, without missing a syllable, and with a certain approving inflection which evidently had an ingratiating effect upon the many-syllabled aristocrat; for he lifted his carefully gloved hand and passed it gently over the little head.

The child took the caress very naturally, and when, presently, the hand returned to the knee, she got possession of it, and began crossing the kid fingers one over the other, quite undisturbed by the fact that they invariably fell apart again as soon as she loosed her hold.

At this juncture the two eavesdroppers moved discreetly away, and Blythe, leaving her fellow-conspirator far behind, flew to her mother's side, crying:

"O Mumsey! She 's simply winding him round her finger, and there 's nothing he won't be ready to do for us now!"

"Yes, dear; I 'm delighted to hear it," Mrs. Halliday replied, with what Blythe was wont to call her "benignant and amused" expression. "And after a while you will tell me what you are talking about!"

But Blythe, nothing daunted, only appealed to Mr. Grey, who had just caught up with her.

"You agree with me, Mr. Grey; don't you?" she insisted.

"Perfectly, and in every particular. Mrs. Halliday, your daughter and I have been eavesdropping, and we have come to confess."

Whereupon Blythe dropped upon the foot of her mother's chair, Mr. Grey established himself in the chair adjoining, and they gave their somewhat bewildered auditor the benefit of a few facts.

"I really believe," the Englishman remarked, in conclusion,—"I really believe that haughty old dago can help us if anybody can. And when your engaging young protégée has completed her conquest,—to-morrow, it may be, or the day

after, for she 's making quick work of it,— we 'll see what can be done with him."

And, after all, what could have been more natural than the attraction which, from that time forth, manifested itself between the Count and his small countrywoman? If the little girl, in making her very marked advances, had been governed by the unwavering instinct which always guided her choice of companions, the old man, for his part, could not but find refreshment, after his long, solitary voyage, in the pretty Tuscan prattle of the child. Most Italians love children, and the Count Giovanni Battista Allamiraviglia appeared to be no exception to his race.

The two would sit together by the hour, absorbed, neither in the lovely sights of this wonderful Mediterranean voyage, nor in the movements of those about them, but simply and solely in one another.

"She 's telling her own story better than we could do," Mr. Grey used to say.

It was now no unusual thing to see the child established on the old gentleman's knee, and once Blythe found her fast

asleep in his arms. But it was not until the very last day of the voyage that the most wonderful thing of all occurred.

The sea was smooth as a lake, and all day they had been sailing the length of the Riviera. All day people had been giving names to the gleaming white points on the distant, dreamy shore,—Nice, Mentone, San Remo,—names fragrant with association even to the mind of the young traveller, who knew them only from books and letters.

Blythe and the little girl were sitting, somewhat apart from the others, on the long bench by the hatchway where Cecilia had first laid siege to the Count's affections, and Blythe was allowing the child to look through the large end of her field-glass,—a source of endless entertainment to them both. Suddenly Cecilia gave a little shriek of delight at the way her good friend, Mr. Grey, dwindled into a pigmy; upon which the Count, attracted apparently by her voice, left his chair and came and sat down beside them.

As he lifted his hat, with a polite "*Per-*

metta, Signorina," Blythe noticed, for the first time on the whole voyage, that he was without his gloves. Perhaps the general humanising of his attitude, through intercourse with the child, had caused him to relax this little point of punctilio.

Cecilia, meanwhile, had promptly climbed upon his knee, and now, laying hold of one of the ungloved hands, she began twisting a large seal ring which presented itself to her mind as a pleasing novelty. Presently her attention seemed arrested by the device of the seal, and she murmured softly, "*Fideliter.*"

Blythe might not have distinguished the word as being Latin rather than Italian, had she not been struck by the change of countenance in the wearer of the ring. He turned to her abruptly, and asked, in French :

"Does she read?"

"No," Blythe answered, thankful that she was not obliged to muster her "conjugations" for the emergency!

There was a swift interchange of question and answer between the old man and

the child, of which Blythe understood but little. She heard Cecilia say "Mamma," in answer to an imperative question; the words "*orologio*" and "*perduto*" were intelligible to her. She was sure that the crest and motto formed the subject of discussion, and it was distinctly borne in upon her that the same device—a mailed hand and arm with the word *Fideliter* beneath it—had been engraved on a lost watch which had belonged to the child's mother. But it was all surmise on her part, and she could hardly refrain from shouting aloud to Mr. Grey, standing over there, in dense unconsciousness, to come quickly and interpret this exasperating tongue, which sounded so pretty, and eluded her understanding so hopelessly.

The mind of the Count seemed to be turning in the same direction, for, after a little, he arose abruptly, and, setting the child down beside Blythe, walked straight across the deck to the Englishman, whom he accosted so unceremoniously that Blythe's sense of wonders unfolding was but confirmed.

The two men turned and walked away to a more secluded part of the deck, where they remained, deep in conversation, for what seemed to Blythe a long, long time. She felt as if she must not leave her seat, lest she miss the thread of the plot,—for a plot it surely was, with its unravelling close at hand.

At last she saw the two men striding forward in the direction of the steerage, and with a conspicuous absence of that aimlessness which marks the usual promenade at sea.

The little girl was again amusing herself with the glasses, and, as the two arbiters of her destiny passed her line of vision, she laughed aloud at their swiftly diminishing forms. Impelled by a curious feeling that the child must take some serious part in this crucial moment of her destiny, Blythe quietly took the glasses from her and said, as she had done each night when she put her little charge to bed :

"Will you say a little prayer, Cecilia?"

And the child, wondering, yet perfectly docile, pulled out the little mother-of-pearl

rosary that she always wore under her dress, and reverently murmured one of the prayers her mother had taught her. After which, as if beguiled by the association of ideas into thinking it bedtime, she curled herself up on the bench, and, with her head in Blythe's lap, fell fast asleep.

And Blythe sat, lost in thought, absently stroking the little head, until suddenly Mr. Grey appeared before her.

"You have been outrageously treated, Miss Blythe," he declared, seating himself beside her, "but I had to let the old fellow have his head."

"Oh, don't tell me anything, till we find Mamma," Blythe cried. "It 's all her doing, you know,—letting me have Cecilia up here," and, gently rousing the sleeper, she said, "Come, Cecilia. We are going to find the Signora."

"And you consider it absolutely certain?" Mrs. Halliday asked, when Mr. Grey had finished his tale. She was far more surprised than Blythe, for she had had a longer experience of life, to teach her a distrust in fairy-stories.

"There does not seem a doubt. The child's familiarity with the crest was striking enough, but that Bellini *Madonna* clinches it. And then, Giuditta's description of both father and mother seems to be unmistakable."

"Oh! To think of his finding the child that he had never heard of, just as he had given up the search for her mother!" Blythe exclaimed.

Cecilia was again playing happily with the glasses, paying no heed to her companions.

"The strangest thing of all to me," Mrs. Halliday declared, "is his relenting toward his daughter after all these years."

"You must not forget that Fate had been pounding him pretty hard," Mr. Grey interposed. "When a man loses in one year two of his children, and the only grandchild he knows anything about, it's not surprising that he should soften a bit toward the only child he has left."

They were still discussing this wonderful subject, when, half an hour later, the tall figure of the Count emerged from the

companionway. As he bent his steps toward the other side of the deck he was visible only to the child, who stood facing the rest of the group. She promptly dropped the glasses upon Blythe's knee, and crying, "*Il Signore!*" ran and took hold of his hand; whereupon the two walked away together and were not seen for a long, long time.

Then Blythe and Mr. Grey went up on the bridge and told the Captain. No one else was to know—not even Mr. DeWitt—until after they had landed, but the Captain was certainly entitled to their confidence.

"For," Blythe said, "you know, Captain Seemann, it never would have happened if you had not sent us up in the crow's nest that day."

Upon which the Captain, beaming his brightest, and letting his cigar go out in the damp breeze for the sake of making his little speech, declared:

"I know one thing! It would neffer haf happen at all, if I had sent anybody else up in the crow's nest but just Miss

Blythe Halliday with her bright eyes and her kind heart!"

And Blythe was so overpowered by this tremendous compliment from the Captain of the *Lorelei* that she had not a word to say for herself.

That evening Mr. Grey inscribed his nonsense-verse in Blythe's book; and not that only, for to those classic lines he added the following:

"The above was composed in collaboration with his esteemed fellow-passenger, Miss Blythe Halliday, by Hugh Dalton, *alias* 'Mr. Grey.'"

It was, of course, a great distinction to own such an autograph as that; yet somehow the kind, witty Mr. Grey had been so delightful just as he was, that Blythe hardly felt as if the famous name added so very much to her satisfaction in his acquaintance.

"I knew it all the time," she declared, quietly; "but it did n't make any difference."

"That 's worth hearing," said Hugh Dalton.

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They parted from the little Cecilia at sunrise, but with promises on both sides of a speedy meeting among the hills of Tuscany.

The old Count, with the child's hand clasped in his, paused as he reached the gangway, at the foot of which the triumphant Giuditta was awaiting them, and pointed toward the rosy east which was flushing the beautiful bay a deep crimson.

"Signorina," he said in his careful French, made more careful by his effort to control his voice,—"Signorina, it is to you that I owe a new dawn,—to you and to your honoured mother."

Then, as Mr. DeWitt and Mr. Grey approached, to tell them that everything was in readiness for them to land, Blythe turned, with the light of the sunrise in her face, and said, under her breath, so that only her mother could hear :

"O Mumsey ! How beautiful the world is, with you and me right in the very middle of it ! "

Artful Madge

CHAPTER I

THE PRIZE CONTEST

"ARTFUL MADGE" was the very flippant name by which Madge Burtwell's brother Ned had persisted in calling her from the time when, at the age of sixteen, she gained reluctant permission to become a student at the Art School.

"Not that we have any objection to art," Mrs. Burtwell was wont to explain in a deprecatory tone; "only we should have preferred to have Madge graduate first, before devoting herself to a mere accomplishment. It seems a little like putting the trimming on a dress before sewing the seams up," she would add; "I did it once when I was a girl, and the dress always had a queer look."

But Mrs. Burtwell, though firm in her

own opinions, was something of a philosopher in her attitude toward the contrary-minded, and even where her own children were concerned she never allowed her influence to degenerate into tyranny. When she found Madge, at the age of sixteen, more eager than ever before to study art, and nothing else, she told her husband that they might as well make up their minds to it, and, at the word, their minds were made up. For Mr. Burtwell was the one entirely and unreasoningly tractable member of Mrs. Burtwell's flock; in explanation of which fact he was careful to point out that only a mature mind could appreciate the true worth of Mrs. Burtwell's judgment.

The Burtwells were people of small means and of correspondingly modest requirements. They lived in an unfashionable quarter of the city, kept a maid-of-all-work, sent their children to the public schools, and got their books from the Public Library. Having no expensive tastes, they regarded themselves as well-to-do and envied no one.

If Madge Burtwell's eyes had been a whit less clear, or her nature a thought less guileless, Ned would not have been so enchanted with his new name for her. Indeed, a few years ago she had been described by an only half-appreciative friend as "a splendid girl without a mite of tact," and if she had succeeded in somewhat softening the asperity of her natural frankness, there was enough of it left to lend a delicate shade of humour to the name.

Artful Madge, then, was a student at the Art School, and a very promising one at that. At the end of three years she had made such good progress that she was promoted to painting in the Portrait Class, and since her special friend and crony, Eleanor Merritt, was also a member of that class, Madge considered her cup of happiness full. Not that there were not visions in plenty of still better things to come, but they seemed so far in the future that they hardly took on any relation with the actual present. Madge and Eleanor dreamed of Europe, of the old masters

and of the great Paris studios, but it is a question whether the fulfillment of any dream could have made them happier than they were to-day. Certain it is, that, as they stood side by side in the great barren studio, clad in their much-bedaubed, long-sleeved aprons, and working away at a portrait head, they had little thought for anything but the task in hand. The one vital matter for the moment was the mixing and applying of their colours, and, in their eagerness to reproduce the exact contour of a cheek, or the precise shadow of an unbeautiful nose, they would hardly have transferred their attention from the most ill-favoured model to the last and greatest Whistler masterpiece.

The girls at the Art School had got hold of Ned's name for his sister and adopted it with enthusiasm.

"If you want to know the truth, ask Artful Madge," was a very common saying among them.

"Artful Madge says it's a good likeness, anyhow!" modest little Minnie Drayton would maintain, when hard

pressed by the teasing of the older girls.

The incongruity of the name seemed somehow to throw into brighter relief the peculiar sincerity of its bearer's character, and by the time it was generally adopted among the students Madge Burtwell's popularity was established.

It was well that Madge was a favourite, for in certain respects she was the worst sinner in the class. To begin with, her palette was the very largest in the room, and the most plentifully besmeared with colours, and woe to the girl who ventured too near it! As Madge stood before her easel, tall and fair and earnest, painting with an ardour and concentration which was all too sure to beguile her into her besetting sin of "exaggerating details," she wielded both brush- and palette-arm with a genial disregard of consequences. Nor could one count upon her confining her activities to one location. Like all the students, she was in the habit of backing away from her natural anchorage from time to time, the better to judge of her

work, and not one of them all had such a fatal tendency to come up against an unoffending easel in the rear, sending canvas and paint-tubes rattling upon the floor.

Instantly she would drop upon her knees, overcome with contrition, and help collect the scattered treasures, giving many a jar or joggle to neighbouring easels in the process.

"It's a shame, Miss Folsom!" she would cry, struggling to her feet again, still clutching her beloved palette, which seemed fairly to rain colours on every surrounding object. "It's a shame! But if you will just cast your eye upon that thing of mine, you will perceive that it was the recklessness of desperation. Look at it! There's not a value in it!"

Artful Madge was always forgiven, and no one ever thought of calling her awkward, and when, in the early autumn, a Saturday sketching club was organised, it was christened "The Artful Daubers" in honor of Madge, and she was unanimously elected president.

The girls were not in the habit of pay-

ing much attention to chance visitors who came in from time to time and made the perilous passage among the easels, and lucky was the "parent" or "art-patron" who escaped without a streak of colour on some portion of his raiment. When Mrs. Oliver Jacques looked in upon them one memorable morning in February no premonition of great things to come stirred the company; only indifferent glances were directed upon her by the few who deigned to observe her at all. And this pleased Mrs. Oliver Jacques very much indeed.

Yet, if the girls had paused to consider, —a thing which they never did when there was a model on the platform,—they would have been aware that their visitor was a person of importance in the world of Art, for importance in no other world would have secured to her the personal escort of Mr. Salome, the adored teacher of their class. Yet Mrs. Jacques was a charming little old lady who would have commanded attention on her own merits in any less preoccupied assembly than

that of the studio. Her exceedingly bright eyes and her exceedingly white hair seemed to accentuate her animation of manner; there was so much sparkle in her face that even her silence did not lack point.

She had accomplished her tortuous passage among the easels without meeting with any mishaps in the shape of Cremnitz-white or crimson-lake. She had paused occasionally and had bestowed a critical nod upon the one "blocked-in" countenance, or had drawn her brows together questioningly over a study in which the nose had a startlingly finished appearance in a still sketchy environment, but not until she had successfully avoided the last easel, planted at an erratic angle just where the unwary would be sure to stub his toe, did she make any remark.

"A lot of them; are n't there?" she observed.

"Yes, the school is pretty full," Mr. Salome replied. "In fact, we 're a little bothered for room."

"Any imagination among them?"

"Well, as to that, it 's rather early to form an opinion. Our aim just now is to keep them to facts. Some of them," the artist added with a smile, "are rather too much inclined to draw upon their imagination. Now there is one girl there who is, humanly speaking, certain to paint the model's hair jet-black, or as black as paint can be made. And yet, you see, there is not a black thread in it."

"I wonder whether you would object to my making an experiment?" Mrs. Jacques asked, abruptly.

And from that seemingly unpremeditated question of Mrs. Jacques', and from the consultation that ensued, grew the Prize Contest, destined to be famous in the annals of the school.

When, on that very afternoon, the students were assembled for the occasion, they had not yet had time to adjust their minds to the magnitude of the interests involved. Yet the conditions were simple enough. That student who should, in the space of two hours, produce the best composition illustrative of "Hope" was to

receive a prize of five hundred dollars! The conviction prevailed among them that the vivacious little old lady with the white hair could be none other than the fairy godmother of nursery lore, and it was only too delightful to find that agile and beneficent myth interesting herself in the cause of Art.

When once the class was fairly launched upon its new emprise, a change in the usual aspect of things became apparent. In the first place, most of the students were seated; for, in a task of pure composition, there was no occasion either for standing or for "prowling,"—the term familiarly applied to the sometimes disastrous backward and forward movements of which mention has been made, and which ordinarily gave so much action to the scene. Furthermore, the use of water-color, as lending itself more readily than oils to rapid execution, deprived the scene of one of its most picturesque features,—namely, the brilliant-hued palette which, with its similarity to a shield, was wont to lend its bearer an Amazonian air, not lost

upon the class caricaturists. Subdued, however, and almost "lady-like" as the appearance of the class had become, hardly half an hour had passed before the genial spirit of creation had so taken possession of the assembly as to cast a glow and glamour of its own upon it. Here and there, to be sure, might still be seen an anxious, intent young face with eyes fixed upon vacancy, or an idle, if somewhat begrimed and parti-coloured hand, fiercely clutching a dejected head; but nearly all were already busily at work, eagerly painting, or as eagerly obliterating strokes too hastily made. The subject, hackneyed as it certainly is, had pleased and stimulated the girls. There was a mingled vagueness and familiarity in its suggestion which puzzled them and spurred them on at the same time.

Among the most impetuous workers, almost from the outset, was Artful Madge. She had instantly conceived of Hope as a vague, beckoning figure, which was to take its significance from the multitude and variety of its followers. She chose a large

sheet of paper and quickly sketched in the upper left-hand corner a very indefinite hint of a winged, luminous something, —it might have been an angel or a bird or a cloud, seen from a great distance, against a somewhat threatening sky. Without defining the form at all she very cleverly produced an impression of receding motion ;—she ventured even to hope that there was something alluring in the motion. That, however, must be made unmistakably clear through the pursuing figures with which she proposed to fill the foreground.

She glanced at Eleanor, who had not yet mixed a colour.

"What are you waiting for?" she asked.

"I don't seem ready to begin," said Eleanor, in an absent tone of voice.

"Have you got an idea?"

"I think so."

"Then do hurry up and go ahead, or you 'll get left."

Madge sat a moment, looking straight before her.

"What are you going to put in there?" asked Eleanor.

"What I want is all the people in the world," Madge replied, with perfect gravity. "But there is not room for them."

A moment later she was working furiously, with hot cheeks and shining eyes and breath coming faster and faster.

First she would have a soldier. Madge had always loved a soldier; her father had been one in the great and splendid days before she was born. Yes, a soldier must come first. And forthwith a very sketchy warrior stepped, with a very martial air, upon the paper. Then an artist ought to come next;—only she could not think of any way of indicating his calling without the aid of some conventional emblem. A mere look of inspiration might belong to a poet or a preacher as well as to an artist. Besides which, she was by no means sure that she knew how to paint a look of inspiration. And then it came to her that, unless she could paint just that, her picture must be a failure; and so she fell upon it, and began sketching in figures of

old and young, rich and poor, trying only to put into each face the eager, upward look which should focus all, in spirit as well as in actual direction, upon the flying, luminous figure. In some attempts she succeeded and in some she failed. There was one old woman, with abnormally deep wrinkles, and shoulders somewhat out of drawing, whose face had caught a curiously inspired look; Madge did not dare touch her again for fear of losing it. Her artist, on the other hand, the young man with the ideal brow and very large eyes, grew more and more inane and expressionless the more eagerly his creator worked at him.

On the whole, the production as a two-hour composition by a three-year student was rather good than bad. When time was called Madge felt pretty sure that she should not win the prize; she had undertaken too much, both for the occasion and for her own ability. And yet it was borne in upon her to-day that she was going to make a better artist than she had ever before dared hope.

So absorbed had she been in her own work, that she had completely forgotten Eleanor, and had not even been aware that her friend had begun painting an hour ago. Now she turned to her with compunction in her heart. Eleanor held her finished sketch in her hand, but her eyes had wandered to the high, broad north window which was one great sheet of radiant blue sky.

Eleanor's composition was very simple, but extremely well done, and in the glance Madge was able to give it before the sketches were handed in she saw that it was delicately suggestive. It represented a curving shore, a quiet sea, and a saffron sky,—no sails on the sea, no clouds in the sky. Upon the shore stood a solitary pine-tree, almost denuded of branches, and against the tree leaned the slender figure of a youth, looking dreamily across the sea to the horizon, where the saffron colour was tinged with gold. That was all, but Madge felt sure that it was enough; and, as she thought about it, she felt herself very small and crude and

confused, and she was conscious of a perfectly calm and dispassionate wish to tear her own sketch in two. She did not do so, however. There was no irritation, nor envy, nor even displeasure, in her mind. She had not supposed that either she or Eleanor could do anything so good as that sketch,—since one of them could, why, that was just so much clear gain.

A moment later the studio was in a tumult. The sketches had been handed over to the three judges, who had gone into instant consultation over them. Mrs. Jacques had decreed, with characteristic decision, that the judges were bound to be as prompt as the competitors, and the award was promised within half an hour. What wonder if the usual tumult of dispersion was increased tenfold by the excitement of the occasion? The voices were pitched in a higher key, the easels clattered more noisily than ever, there was a more lively movement among the many-hued aprons, as they were pulled off and consigned with many a shake and a flourish to their respective pegs.



"Eleanor's eyes had wandered to the high, broad north window."

"What did you paint?" asked one high voice, whose owner was enthusiastically shaking the water from her paint-brush all over the floor.

"I painted you—working for the prize."

"Not really!"

"Yes, really! You were just at the right angle for it, and you did look so hopeful!"

"You can't make me believe you played such a shabby trick upon me, Mary Downing!"

"Shabby! If you knew how good-looking you were at a three-eighths' angle you would be grateful to me! You did have such an inspired look for a little while,—before you got disgusted, and began to wash out."

"Jane Rhoades did an awfully pretty thing—a white bird with a boy running after it. But I felt perfectly certain that the little wretch had a gun in his other hand!"

"What a fiery head you gave your angel, Mattie Stiles! He looked like Loge in *Rheingold!*"

"I don't care," said Mattie, in a tone of

voice that showed that she did care very much indeed. "I do like red hair, and we have n't had a chance to paint any all winter."

"Red hair would n't make Titians of us," sighed Miss Isabella Ricker, who was of a despondent temperament.

"It would n't be any hindrance, anyhow!" Mattie insisted.

Meanwhile the half-hour was drawing to a close. A general air of rough order had descended upon the studio. The girls were sitting or standing about in groups, their remarks getting more disjointed and irrelevant as the nervousness of anticipation grew upon them. Madge and Eleanor had found a seat on the steps of the platform. The former was making a pencil sketch of Miss Isabella Ricker, who had abandoned herself to dejection in a remote corner of the room. Madge looked up suddenly, and found that Eleanor was watching her work.

"Your thing is very interesting," she remarked, in a reserved tone, which, nevertheless, sent the colour mounting slowly

up her friend's sensitive cheek. They both understood that no more commendatory adjective than "interesting" was to be found in the art-student's vocabulary.

"You 're partial, Madge."

"Not a bit of it. But I know an interesting thing when I see it. If you win the prize," she asked abruptly, "what shall you do with the money?"

"If you go to the moon next week, what shall you do with the green cheese?" Eleanor retorted, with an unprecedented outburst of sarcasm.

"I think you might answer my question," said Madge; and at that instant the door opened and a hush fell upon the room.

The suspense was not painfully prolonged. The Curator of the Art Museum, who had been associated with Mrs. Jacques and Mr. Salome as judge, stepped upon the platform, from which Madge and Eleanor had precipitately retreated, and made the following announcement:

"We have, on the whole," he said, "been very well pleased with the work we

have had to consider. In fact, several of the sketches were better than anything we had looked for. Nevertheless our decision was not a difficult one, and our choice is unanimous. The prize which Mrs. Jacques has had the originality and the generosity to offer has been awarded to Mary Eleanor Merritt."

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"And now will you answer my question?"

Madge and Eleanor were walking home together through the light snow which had just begun to fall. They had been curiously shy of speaking, and, before the silence was broken, a pretty wreath of snow had formed itself about the rim of each of their black felt hats, while little ribbons of it were decorating the folds of their garments.

"What are you going to do with your green cheese?"

"I shall go to Paris next autumn," said Eleanor, tightly clasping the check which she held inside her muff.

"That 's what I thought," said Madge; and if her eyes grew a trifle red and moist it was perhaps natural enough, since the snow was flying straight into them.

CHAPTER II

THE MINIATURE

"WHAT makes you keep looking at me, Eleanor Merritt? You 're not a bit of a good model!"

Thus reproved, Eleanor once more fixed her eyes upon a very bad oil-portrait of Great-grandfather Burtwell, an elderly man of a wooden countenance, in stock and choker, surmounting an expanse of black broadcloth which occupied two-thirds of the canvas.

The girls were established in what was known as the spare-room of the Burtwell house, which, with its north light and usual freedom from visitors made a very good studio. Madge was painting a miniature of Eleanor. The diminutive size of her undertaking was causing her a good deal of embarrassment, and she was con-

sequently inclined to be rather severe with her sitter.

"You know I am not going to have many more chances of looking at you for a year to come," Eleanor urged, in a tone of meek dejection.

"And I can't see you, even now," Madge persisted, "if you don't turn more toward the light."

There was silence again for some minutes, while Madge painted steadily on. Difficult as was this new task which she had set herself, she was captivated with it. However the miniature might turn out as a likeness, she felt sure that each stroke of her brush was making a prettier picture of it. The eyes already had the real Eleanor look, and the hair was "pretty nice." The mouth was troublesome, to be sure, and to-day she did not feel inspired to improve it, and had turned her attention to less important details.

"You 've got such a pretty ear!" she remarked presently, as she touched its outermost rim with a hair line, cocking her head to one side, the while, in a very

professional manner; "Did you ever notice what a pretty ear you have?"

"Better be careful how you talk about it," Eleanor laughed, "for fear it should begin to burn!"

The artist looked in some trepidation at the feature in question, but its soft hue did not deepen. She took the precaution, however, to change the subject; to one which she often chose, indeed, for the sake of the animation it brought into the pretty face of her model. Eleanor's "repose" sometimes bothered her.

"What shall you do the first day in Paris?" Madge asked.

"I shall write to you."

"Good gracious! You won't write to me before you have seen the Louvre!"

"I shall write to you the very first minute. And then I shall write again that same evening, and tell you whether there really is a Louvre! If there should n't be one, you know, I should n't feel so like a pig in being there without you!"

"You need n't feel like a pig, as far as that goes," said Madge. "I could n't

have gone to Paris if I had won the prize."

"Why not?"

"Well; I had it out with Father this morning. He says it 's not a mere matter of money; that if he and Mother thought well of my going, they could manage it."

"O Madge! Can't you make them think well of it?"

"I 'm afraid not. Father never did really believe in my going in for art, and I think he believes in it less now than he ever did. He says I 've been at it for three years, and I have n't painted a pretty picture yet. And he says he does n't see what good it 's going to do me in after-life; that if I marry I sha'n't keep it up, and there would n't be any good in my trying to;—which is, of course a mistake, only I can't make him believe that it is,—and he says that if I don't marry, I 've got to earn my living sooner or later."

"Why, but that 's just it, Madge! You 're going to be able to earn your living! You 're sure to!"

But Madge was again engrossed in her work. The afternoon would soon draw to a close, and if she wished to carry out her designs upon that ear it behooved her to stop talking. Though her little picture was an oval of three inches by four, it had cost her more strokes than any canvas of ten times the size had ever done. And Eleanor was to sail in a fortnight!

At last the light began to fade, and Madge knew that she must stop.

"What do you suppose Father said to me this morning?" she asked, as she washed out her brushes and put her paint-box in order.

"I can't imagine."

"Well; he said that when any good judge thought my pictures worth paying for in good hard cash, it would be time to think of sending me 'traipsing over the world with my paint-pot.' He said that if I would come to him with a fifty-dollar bill of my own earning he should begin to think there was some sense in my art-talk."

"Did he really say that? Why, Madge who knows?"

Madge had shut up her paint-box and moved to the window, where she was gloomily looking down into her neighbours' backyards.

"If you mean Noah's Dove," she said, "You might as well give him up. He 's come back for the thirteenth time."

Now "Noah's Dove" was the name which Madge had bestowed upon a small bundle of pen-and-ink sketches which she had been sending about to the illustrated papers for two or three months past, and which had earned their name by the persistency with which they had found their way back again. The girls had both thought them funny and original ; indeed Eleanor, with the partiality of one's best friend, did not hesitate to pronounce them better than many of the things that got accepted. Up to this time, however, no editor had seemed disposed to recognise their merits, and they had been repeatedly and ignominiously rejected.

"But you 'll keep on sending them, won't you, Madge?" Eleanor insisted.

"Of course I shall, as long as there is a

picture-paper left in the country; though the postage does cost an awful lot!"

The sun had set, and a tinge of rosy colour was spreading across the northern sky behind the chimneys. The girls stood silent for a moment, watching the colour deepen, while a wistful look came into Eleanor's face.

"After all, Madge," she said; "it must be nice to have somebody think for you, even when he does n't think the way you want him to."

"Oh, of course, Father 's a dear. I don't suppose I would swap him off, even for Paris!"

"I wish I could even remember my father or my mother, or anybody that really belonged to me!" Eleanor said; then, feeling that she was making an appeal for sympathy, a thing which she was principled against doing, she turned her eyes away from the tender, beguiling colour behind the chimneys, and looked, instead, at the big oil portrait on the wall. "It 's something to have even a painted grandfather of your own!" she declared.

"How I should love to give you mine!" laughed Madge. "He 's such a horrible daub, and I should so like to have the frame when it comes time to exhibit! You would not insist upon having him in a frame, would you, Nell?"

Presently the girls went down-stairs together and Eleanor stayed to tea, and told the family all about her Paris plans, and how she felt like a pig to be going without Madge. And all the time, as she talked to these kindly, sympathetic people, it seemed to her that Madge was even more to be envied than she; and she wished she knew how to say so in an acceptable manner. But Eleanor found as much difficulty as most of us do, in expressing our best and truest thoughts, and so the Burtwell family never knew what a heart-warming impression they had made upon their guest.

Eleanor had lived for the past three years with a married cousin, a daughter of the not particularly congenial or affectionate Aunt Sarah, now deceased, who had brought her up from babyhood. The

gentle, sensitive girl, with the artistic temperament, had never been happy with her cousin, though the latter was far from suspecting the fact. Mrs. Hamilton Hicks was fond of Eleanor, or imagined herself to be so, and she always gave her young cousin her due share of credit, in view of the fact that they had "never had any words together." Nevertheless, she had acceded very readily to the Paris plan, and had herself taken pains to find a suitable chaperon for the young traveller.

The result was, that on the fifteenth of September Eleanor went forth into the great world in company with a lively and voluble Frenchwoman, a lady whom she had seen but twice before in her life, who had promised to establish her in a good private family in Paris. And since Mrs. Hamilton Hicks had negotiated the arrangement, its success was a foregone conclusion.

When Madge left the railway station after bidding Eleanor good-bye, and stepped out into the crowded city thor-

oughfare, the world seemed to her very empty and desolate, in spite of the multitude of her fellow-creatures who jostled against her. She could think of nothing but Eleanor, standing on the platform of the car as the train moved out of the station, and she was desperately sorry to have lost the last sight of her friend's tearful face, because of a curious blur that had come over her own eyes at the moment. At the recollection, she mechanically put her hand into her pocket in search of the miniature which she usually carried about with her. She had left it at home lest she should lose it in the crowded railway station. It gave her a pang not to find it, and she made up her mind then and there that she would never go without it again.

The moment she reached her own room she seized the picture and had a good look at it. She had placed it in the inner gilt rim of an old daguerreotype, which set it off very nicely. She had discarded the hard leather daguerreotype case, as being too clumsy to carry about in her pocket,

and in its place had made a sort of pocket-book of red morocco which was a sufficient protection for the glass, in her careful keeping.

She had never liked the picture so well as she did to-day, for she thought of it now for the first time, not as a work of art, but as a likeness, and imperfect as it was, even from that point of view, it gave her very great pleasure to look at it. Yes, decidedly, she must always have it by her hereafter; and she slipped it into her pocket while she made herself ready for tea.

But supposing she should have her pocket picked! A pickpocket, she reflected, might, in the hastiness which must always characterise his operations, mistake the little leather case for a purse, and then—how should she ever get the precious miniature back again? "Not that he would want to keep it," she said to herself, as she took it out once more for a parting look,—"unless he should lose his heart to that ear!"—and she regarded the tiny pink object with pardonable

pride. But with the best intentions in the world, how would he be able to restore it? She must put her address in the case; that would be a simple matter.

An hour later, the family were gathered about the great round table in the pleasant sitting-room, pursuing their various avocations by the light of an excellent argand burner. Mr. Burtwell was reading his evening paper, imparting occasional choice bits to his wife and his eldest daughter, Julia, who were dealing with a heap of mending. The two younger children were playing lotto, while Ned was having a hand-to-hand tussle with his Cicero, a foeman likely to prove worthy of his steel.

Madge had taken out a sheet of paper, with a view to inscribing her address upon it. The mere act of doing so had called up to her mind so vivid an impression of the thief for whose information it was destined, that she suddenly felt impelled to address to him a few words of admonition. With an agreeable sense of the absurdity of her performance, she began a letter to

this figment of her imagination, and this is what she wrote :

" Dear Pickpocket,

" For, as I shall never leave this miniature about anywhere, you must be a pickpocket if it falls into your hands. To begin with, then ; it is not a good miniature at all, and there is no use in your trying to sell it. In fact, it is a very bad miniature, as you will see if you know anything about such things, which you probably don't. But it is very valuable to me, and so I hope you will return it to me as soon as you find out how bad it is. You probably won't want to bring it yourself,—I 'm sure I should not think you would !—but you can perfectly well send it by express, and you can let them collect charges on delivery, unless you think that, under the circumstances, you ought to prepay them. My address is,

Miss Margaret Burtwell," etc.

Madge read over her production with an amusement and satisfaction which quite filled, for the moment, the aching

void of which she had been so painfully conscious. The letter occupied but one-half the sheet, and, as the young artist's eye fell upon the blank third page, she was seized with an irresistible impulse to draw a picture on it.

The figure of the pickpocket was by this time so vivid to her mind, that she began making a pen-and-ink sketch of him, as a dark-browed villain in the act of rifling the pocket of a very haughty young woman proceeding along the street with an air of extreme self-consciousness. The drawing was on a very small scale, and when it was finished to her satisfaction there was still half the page unoccupied. Madge hastily wrote under the sketch the words: "The Crime," and a moment later she was engrossed in the execution of a still more dramatic design, representing the criminal in the hands of two stalwart policemen, being ignominiously dragged through the street toward a sort of mediæval fortress, with walls some twenty feet thick, upon which was inscribed in enormous characters, "JAIL." Still more action

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was given the drawing by the introduction of two or three small and gleeful ragamuffins, dancing a derisive war-dance behind the captive, and of two dogs of doubtful lineage, barking like mad on the outskirts of the group. Under this picture was inscribed, "The Consequences of Crime," and at the bottom of the page appeared the words, "Behold and tremble!"

"What 's Artful Madge up to?" asked Ned, as he closed his Latin Dictionary with a bang.

"Writing a letter," Madge replied, composedly.

"To the Prize Pig?"

"The what?"

"The Prize Pig! You know Eleanor said she felt like a pig to be going to Paris without you, and as she got the prize——"

"You impudent boy!"

"Not in the least. I 'm only witty."

"Witty!"

"Yes,—I 've heard wit defined as the unexpected."

"The dictionary does n't define it so,

and good manners don't define impudence as wit."

"We're not discussing impudence, we're discussing wit. And I know positively that wit is defined as the unexpected."

"Let's have your authority," said Mr. Burtwell, who had not heard the first part of the discussion.

"Let us see what the dictionary says," suggested Julia, who was the scholar of the family.

"Very well; and what will you bet that I'm not right?"

"We don't bet in this family," said Mr. Burtwell, with decision.

"Oh, well, that's only a form of speech. What will you do for me, Madge, if I'm right?"

"I'll put you into an allegorical sketch."

"Good! I always wondered that you did n't make use of such good material in the artful line!"

The wire dictionary-stand, containing the portly form of Webster Unabridged, was instantly brought up to the light, and

there was half a minute's silence while Ned turned the leaves.

"Score me one!" he shouted, in high glee. "Listen to Webster! 'Wit. 3. Felicitous association of objects not usually connected, so as to produce a pleasant surprise.' Quite at your service, my artful relative, whenever you would like a sitting!"

"I protest! You have n't won!"

"Have n't won, indeed! I leave it to the gentlemen of the jury. Is not the name of Prize Pig for Miss Eleanor Merritt a 'felicitous association of objects not usually connected'?"

"No! The association is infelicitous, and consequently it does not produce a 'pleasant surprise.'"

The family listened with the amused tolerance with which they usually left such discussions to the two chief wranglers.

"I maintain," insisted Ned, "that the association of objects is felicitous, and must be, because it was instituted by Miss Eleanor Merritt herself. She won the prize, and she said she was a pig."

"But it does n't produce a pleasant surprise," Madge objected.

"I beg your pardon! It *has* produced a pleasant surprise, as I can testify, for I have experienced it myself. What is your verdict, Mother?"

"My verdict is, that it 's a pity, as I always thought it was, that you are not to be a lawyer, and that Madge can't do better than practise her drawing by making the allegorical sketch."

That Mrs. Burtwell should be on Ned's side was a foregone conclusion, and Madge appealed to her father.

"Father, is calling Eleanor Merritt a prize pig a form of wit?"

"Pretty poor wit I should call it!"

"Father is on my side!" shouted Ned. "He says it 's poor wit, which is only one way of saying that it is wit!"

"Can wit be poor?" asked Julia.

"Father says it can."

"Then it is n't wit!" Madge protested.

"I should like to know why not. Old Mr. Tanner is a poor man, but he 's a man for all that, and votes at elections

for the highest bidder. And your logic 's poor, but I suppose you 'd call it logic ! "

" I have an idea ! " cried Madge. " I 'm going to make my fortune out of you ! I 'm going to make a pair of excruciatingly funny pictures of you ! The first shall be called *The Student and Logic*, and the second shall be called *Logic and the Student !* In the first the student shall be patting Logic on the head, and in the second,—oh, it 's an inspiration ! "

And forthwith Madge seized a large sheet of paper and began work.

" I 'm not sure that this won't be the beginning of a series," she declared. " When it 's finished I shall send it to a funny paper and get fifty dollars for it,—and when I have got fifty dollars for it, Father will send me to Paris ; won't you, Daddy, dear ? "

" What 's that ? What 's that ? " asked Mr. Burtwell.

" When I get fifty dollars,—*or more !* —for my Student, you will send me to Europe ! "

" Oh, yes ! And when you 're Queen

of England I shall be presented at Court! Listen to what the paper says: 'The Honourable Jacob Luddington and family have just returned from an extensive foreign tour. The two Miss Luddingtons were presented at the Court of St. James, where their exceptional beauty and elegance are said to have made a marked impression.' Good for the Honourable Jacob! His father was my father's choreman, and here are his daughters hobnobbing with crowned heads!"

From which digression it is fair to conclude that Mr. Burtwell did not attach any great importance to his daughter's question or to his own answer. But Madge put away the promise in the safest recesses of her memory as carefully as she had tucked the letter to her "dear pickpocket" inside the red morocco pocketbook. It seemed as if the one were likely to be called for about as soon as the other,—"which means never at all!" she said to herself, with a profound sigh.

"The throes of creation have begun," Ned chuckled; and then, as he watched

his sister's business-like proceedings, marvelling the while at what he secretly considered her quite phenomenal skill, he let himself be sufficiently carried away by enthusiasm to remark, "I say, Madge, you 're no fool at that sort of thing, if you *are* a girl!"

CHAPTER III

NOAH'S DOVE

"I REALLY think, Miss Burtwell, you might be a little more careful," Miss Isabella Ricker wailed, in a tone of hopeless remonstrance. It was the third time that morning that Madge had knocked against her easel, and human nature could bear no more.

"I think so too," said Madge, in a voice as dejected as her victim's own. "If I only knew how to prowl more intelligently, I would, I truly would."

"Tie yourself to your own easel," suggested Delia Smith; "then that will have to go first."

"You're a good one to talk!" cried Mary Downing. "You've upset my things twice this very morning!"

"Put those two behind each other,"

Josephine Wilkes suggested. "It will be a lesson to them."

"And who's going to sit behind the rear one?" somebody asked.

"Harriet Wells," Delia Smith proposed. "Mr. Salome said 'very good' to her this morning; she must be proof against adversity."

"No one is proof against adversity," Madge declared, in a tragic tone; but her remark passed unheeded. The girls were already at work again, and nothing short of another wreck was likely to distract their attention. The scrape of a palette-knife, the tread of a prowler, or the shoving of a chair to one side, were the only sounds audible in the room, excepting when the occasional roar of an electric car or the rattle of a passing waggon came in at the open window. It was the first warm day in April.

Artful Madge's sententious observation with regard to adversity was the fruit of bitter experience. Misfortune's arrows had been raining thick and fast about her, and although she was holding her ground

against them very well, she felt that adversity was a subject on which she was fitted to speak with authority.

In the first place, her Student series was proving to be quite as much of a Noah's Dove as the first set of sketches which had so signally failed to find a permanent roosting-place in an inhospitable world. Only yesterday the familiar parcel had made its appearance on the front-entry table, that table which, for a year past, she had never come in sight of without a quicker beating of the heart. If she ever did have a bit of success, she often reflected, that piece of ancestral mahogany was likely to be the first to know of it. How often she had dreamed of the small business envelope, addressed in an unfamiliar hand, which might one day appear there! It would be half a second before she should take in the meaning of it. Then would come a premonitory thrill, instantly justified by a glance at the upper left-hand corner of the envelope, where the name of some great periodical would seem literally blazoned forth, however

small the type in which it was printed. And then,—oh, then! the tearing open of the envelope, the unfolding of the sheet with trembling fingers, the check! Would it be for $10 or $15 or even $25, and might there be a word of editorial praise or admonition? Foolish, foolish dreams! And there was that hideous parcel, which she was getting to hate the very sight of! As she squeezed a long rope of burnt-sienna upon her palette, she made up her mind that she would wait a week before exposing herself to another disappointment. Perhaps the Student would improve with keeping, like violins and old masters. Certainly if he was anything like his prototype he needed maturing.

Meanwhile the model's mouth was proving as troublesome to paint as Eleanor's had been, and as Madge grew more and more perplexed with the problem of it she thought of the miniature with a fresh pang. For she had lost it! Three days ago it had somehow slipped from her possession. Had she left it lying on the table in the Public Library? Nobody

there had seen anything of it. But on the very day of her loss she had been at the Library, examining the current numbers of all the illustrated papers, in the hope of gleaning some hint as to editorial tastes. She remembered reading Eleanor's last letter there, the letter in which her friend had written that she was to have two years more of Paris. She had read the letter through twice, and then she had taken out the miniature and had a good look at it. To think of Eleanor, having two more years of Paris! And it had all come about so simply! She had merely persuaded her cousin, Mr. Hicks, to advance a few hundred dollars till she should be of age and at liberty to sell a bond.

"There is n't anybody that believes in me," Madge had told herself; and then she had thought of something that Mr. Salome had said to her a few days ago, something that she would have considered it very unbecoming to repeat, even to Eleanor, but the memory of which, thus suddenly recalled, had filled her with such

hopefulness that she had sped homeward to the mahogany table almost with a conviction of success. Was it in that sudden rush of hopefulness, so mistaken, alas, so groundless, that she had left the little morocco case lying about? Or had she pulled it out of her pocket with her handkerchief? Or had she really had her pocket picked?

What wonder that in the stress of anxious speculation she was making bad work of her painting! This would never do! She took a long stride backwards, and over went Miss Ricker's long-suffering easel, prone upon the floor, carrying with it a neighbouring structure of similar unsteadiness, which was, however, happily empty, save for a couple of jam-pots filled with turpentine and oil! These plunged with headlong impetuosity into space, forming little rivers of stickiness, as they rolled half-way across the room. Everybody rushed to the rescue, while Miss Ricker gazed upon the catastrophe with stony displeasure.

By a miracle, the canvas, though "but-

ter-side-down," had escaped unscathed. Not until she was assured of this did the culprit speak.

"I 'm a disgrace to the class," she said, "and expulsion is the only remedy. Tell Mr. Salome that I have forfeited every right to membership, and it 's quite possible that I may never exaggerate another detail as long as I live."

"Time 's up in two minutes," Mary Downing remarked, in her matter-of-fact voice, as she dabbed some yellow-ochre upon her subject's chin. "I rather think you 'll come back to-morrow."

"But I do think it 's somebody's else turn to work behind her," said Josephine Wilkes.

Miss Ricker gave a faint, assenting smile.

"I think Miss Ricker is very much indebted to Artful Madge," Harriet Wells declared. "There is n't another girl in the class who could have knocked that easel over without damaging the picture."

"Practice makes perfect," some one observed; and then, time being called,

everybody began talking at once, and wit and wisdom were alike lost upon the company.

But Artful Madge was not to be lightly consoled.

"Mother," she said, that same afternoon, as she came into the little sitting-room over the front entry, where her mother was stitching on the sewing-machine, "I think I should like to do something useful. I 'm kind of tired of art."

Madge had been helping wash the luncheon dishes, and was beginning to wonder whether her talents were not, perhaps, of a purely domestic order.

"I should think you *would* be tired of it!" said Mrs. Burtwell, in perfect good faith, as she snipped the thread at the end of a seam. "How you can make up your mind to spend all your days bedaubing your clothes with those nasty paints passes my comprehension."

"But sometimes I daub the canvas," Madge protested, with unwonted meekness, as she drew a grey woollen sock over

her hand, and pounced upon a small hole in the toe ; and at that very instant, which Madge was whimsically regarding as a possible turning-point in her career, the door-bell rang.

"A gintleman to see you, Miss," said Nora, a moment later, handing Madge a card.

"To see me?" asked Madge, incredulously, as she read the name, "Mr. Philip Spriggs! Are you sure he did n't ask for Father?"

But Nora was quite clear that she had not made a mistake.

"Who is it, Madge?" Mrs. Burtwell queried.

"It 's probably a book agent," said Madge, as she went down-stairs to the parlour, rather begrudging the interruption to her darning bout.

Standing by the window, hat in hand, was an elderly man of a somewhat severe cast of countenance, as unsuggestive as possible, in his general appearance, of the comparatively frivolous name which a satirical fate had bestowed upon him.

As Madge entered the room he observed, without advancing a step toward her: "You are Miss Burtwell, I suppose. I came to answer your letter in person."

"My letter?" asked Madge, with a confused impression that something remarkable was going forward.

"Yes; this one,"—and he drew from his pocket the red morocco miniature case.

"Oh!" cried Madge, "how glad I am to have it!—and how kind you are to bring it!—and, oh! that dreadful letter!"

The three aspects of the case had chased each other in rapid succession through her mind, and each had got itself expressed in turn.

Mr. Spriggs did not relax a muscle of his face.

"I found this on a table in the Public Library," he stated. "Your directions were so explicit that I could do no less than be guided by them."

There was something so solemn, almost judicial, about her guest that Madge became quite awestruck.

"Won't you please take a seat?" she

begged, humbly. "I think I could apologise better if you were to sit down."

"Then you consider that there is occasion to apologise?" he asked, taking the proffered chair, and resting his hat upon the floor.

"Indeed, yes!" said Madge. "It 's perfectly dreadful to think of the letter having fallen into the hands of any one so—" and she broke short off.

"So what?" asked Mr. Spriggs.

"Why, so dignified and so—very different from—" but again she found herself unable to finish her sentence.

"From a 'dear pickpocket?'" he suggested.

"Did I say 'dear pickpocket'?" cried Madge in consternation. "I did n't know I said 'dear.'"

"I suppose you desired to make a favourable impression, in order to get your picture back. There are some very good points about the picture," he remarked, as he took it out of the case and examined it. "There 's a good deal of drawing in it, and considerable colour."

"Do you know about pictures?" asked Madge with eager interest.

"Not much. I've heard more or less art-jargon in my day; that's all."

Madge looked at him suspiciously.

"I am sure you will agree with me that I don't know much," he continued, "when I tell you that I prefer your pen-and-ink work to the miniature. 'The Consequences of Crime' is full of humour; and I have been given to understand that you can't produce an effect without skill,—what you would probably dignify with the name of technique. The second small boy on the right is not at all bad."

"You do know about art!" cried Madge. "I rather think you must be an artist."

Mr. Spriggs did not exactly change countenance; he only looked as if he were either trying to smile or trying not to. Madge wished she could make out just what were the lines and shadows in his face that produced this singular expression.

"Have you never thought of doing anything for the papers?" he asked.

"Thought of it! I've spent four dollars and sixty-one cents in postage within the last ten months, and he always comes back to the ark!"

"'He'? Comes back where?"

"To the ark. I call the package 'Noah's Dove' because it never finds a place to roost."

"The original dove did, after a while." Mr. Spriggs spoke as if he were taking the serious, historical view of the incident. "I imagine yours will, one of these days. Have you got anything you could show me?"

"Would you really care to see?"

"I can't tell till you show me," he said cautiously; but this time there was something so very like a smile among the stern features that Madge could see just what the line was that produced it.

She flew to her room, and seized Noah's Dove, and in five minutes that much-travelled bird had spread his wings,—all six of them,—for the delectation of this mysterious critic.

Madge watched him, as he leaned back

in his chair and examined the sketches. He seemed inclined to take his time over them, and she felt sure that her Student had never before been so seriously considered.

At last Mr. Spriggs laid the drawings upon the table and fixed his thoughtful gaze upon the artist. His contemplation of her countenance was prolonged a good many seconds, yet Madge did not feel in the least self-conscious; it never once occurred to her that this severe old gentleman was thinking of anything but her Student. She found herself taking a very low view of her work, and quite ready to believe that perhaps, after all, those unappreciative editors knew what they were about.

"Have you ever sent these to the *Gay Head?*" her visitor inquired casually.

"Oh, no! I should not dare send anything to the *Gay Head!*"

"Why not?"

"Why! Because it 's the best paper in the country. It would never look at my things."

"It certainly won't if you never give it a chance. You had better try it," he went on, in a tone that carried a good deal of weight. "You know they can do no worse than return it; and I should think, myself, that the *Gay Head* was quite as well worth expending postage-stamps on as any other paper. Mind; I don't say they 'll take your things,—but it 's worth trying for. By the way," he added as he rose to go; "I would n't send No. 5 if I were you; it 's a chestnut."

He had picked up his hat and stood on his feet so unexpectedly that Madge was afraid he would escape her without a word of thanks.

"Oh, please wait just a minute," she begged. "I have n't told you a single word of how grateful I am. I feel somehow as if,—as if,—*the worst were over!*" This time Mr. Spriggs smiled broadly.

"And you will send Noah's Dove to the *Gay Head?*"

"Yes, I will, because you advise me to. But you must n't think I 'm conceited enough to expect him to roost there."

And that very evening the dove spread his wings,—only five of them now,—and set forth on the most ambitious flight he had yet ventured upon.

In the next few days Madge found her thoughts much occupied with speculations regarding her mysterious visitor; everything about him, his name, his errand, both the matter and the manner of his speech, roused and piqued her curiosity. It was clear that he knew a great deal about art. And yet, if he were an artist, she would certainly be familiar with his name. Whatever his calling, he was sure to be distinguished. Those judicial eyes would be severe with any work more pretentious than that of a mere student; that firm, discriminating hand,—she had been struck with the way he handled her sketches,—would never have signed a poor performance. Perhaps it was Elihu Vedder in disguise,—or Sargent, or Abbey! Since the descent of the fairy-godmother upon the class a year ago, no miracle seemed impossible. And yet, the miracle which actually befell would have seemed,

of all imaginable ones, the most incredible. It took place, too, in the simplest, most unpremeditated manner, as miracles have a way of doing.

One evening, about a week after the return of the miniature, the family were gathered together as usual about the argand burner. It was a warm evening, and Ned, who was to devote his energies to the cause of electrical science, when once he was delivered from the thraldom of the classics, had made some disparaging remarks about the heat engendered by gas.

"By the way," said Mr. Burtwell, "that reminds me! I have a letter for you, Madge. I met the postman just after I left the door this noon, and he handed me this with my gas bill. Who 's your New York correspondent?"

"I 'm sure I don't know," said Madge, with entire sincerity, for it was far too early to look for any word from the *Gay Head.*

The letter had the appearance of a friendly note, being enclosed in a square

envelope, undecorated with any business address. Madge opened it, and glanced at the signature, which was at the bottom of the first page. The blood rushed to her face as her eye fell upon the name: "Philip Spriggs, Art Editor of the *Gay Head*."

She read the letter very slowly, with a curious feeling that this was a dream, and she must be careful not to wake herself up. This was what she read:

"My dear Miss Burtwell,

"We like Noah's Dove as much as I thought we should. We shall hope to get him out some time next year. Can 't you work up the pickpocket idea? That small boy, the second one from the right, is nucleus enough for another set. In fact, it is the small-boy element in your Student that makes him original—and true to life. We think that you have the knack, and count upon you for better work yet. We take pleasure in handing you herewith a check for this.

"Yours truly,

"Philip Spriggs."

The check was a very plain one on thin yellow paper, not in the least what she had looked for from a great publishing-house; but the amount inscribed in the upper left-hand corner of the modest slip of paper seemed to her worthy the proudest traditions of the *Gay Head* itself. The check was for sixty dollars.

As Madge gradually assured herself that she was awake, the first sensation that took shape in her mind was the very ridiculous one of regret that the mahogany table should have been deprived of its legitimate share in this great event. And then she remembered that it was her father himself who had handed her the letter.

She was still wondering how she should break the news to him, when she found herself giving an odd little laugh, and asking, "Father, what is your favourite line of ocean steamers?"

Mr. Burtwell, who had really felt no special curiosity as to his daughter's correspondent, was once more immersed in his evening paper. He looked up, at her

words, as all the family did, and was struck by the expression of her face.

"What makes you ask that?" he demanded sharply.

"Because I know you always keep your promises, and—there's a letter you might like to read."

Mr. Burtwell took the letter, frowning darkly, a habit of his when he was puzzled or anxious. He read the letter through twice, and then he examined the check. He did not speak at once. There was something so portentous in this deliberation, and something so very like emotion in his kind, sensible face, that even Ned was awed into respectful silence.

At last Mr. Burtwell turned his eyes to his daughter's face, where everything, even suspense itself, seemed arrested, and said, in a matter-of-fact tone:

"I think you had better go by the North German Lloyd. Shall you start this week?"

"Oh, you darling!" cried Madge, throwing her arms about her father's neck, re-

gardless of letter and check, which, being still in his hands, were called upon to bear the brunt of this attack; "How can I ever make up my mind to leave you?"

The Ideas of Polly

CHAPTER I

DAN'S PLIGHT

"*Well*, Mis' Lapham, I *am* sorry to hear it, I *must* say! It *doos* seem 's though you 'd *had* your share of affliction!"

Mrs. Henry Dodge always emphasised a great many of her words, which habit gave to her remarks an impression of peculiar sincerity and warmth; a perfectly correct impression, too, it must be admitted. Her needle, moreover, being quite as energetic as her tongue, she was a valuable member of the sewing-circle, at which function she was now assisting with much spirit.

Mrs. Lapham accepted this tribute to her many trials with becoming modesty. She was a dull, colourless woman whose sole distinction lay in the visitations of

affliction, and it is not too much to affirm that she was proud of them. She was sewing, not too rapidly, on a very long seam, which occupation was typical of her course of life. She sighed heavily in response to her neighbour's words of sympathy, and said:

"It did seem hard that it should have been Dan, just as he was beginning to be a help to his uncle, and all. But I s'pose we 'd ought to have been prepared for it."

"There 's been quite a pause in the death-roll," the Widow Criswell observed. She was engaged in sewing a button on a boy's jacket with a black thread.

"How long is it since Eliza went?" asked Miss Louisa Bailey, pursuing the widow's train of thought.

"Seven years this month. She began to cough at Christmas, and by Washington's Birthday she was in her grave."

"And Jane? They did n't go very far apart, did they?"

"No, Jane died eleven months before Eliza; and their mother went three years

before that, and their father when Dan was a baby; that's goin' on sixteen years."

"*Well*, you *have* had a hard time, I *will* say!" exclaimed Mrs. Dodge. "Your Martha losing her little girl, and John's wife breaking her collar-bone, and all, and now *this* to be gone through with! I *should* think you 'd feel *discouraged!*"

"I do; real discouraged. But I s'pose it 's no more than I 'd ought to expect, with such an inheritance."

"Have there been many cases of lung-trouble on your side of the family, Mrs. Lapham?" Miss Bailey inquired with respectful interest.

"No; Sister Fitch was the first case."

For a few seconds, conversation languished, and only the snip of Mrs. Royce's scissors could be heard, and the soft rustle of cotton cloth. The sewing-circle was going on in the church vestry where there was a faint odour from the kerosene lamps, which had just been lighted. The Widow Criswell was the first to break the silence.

"Polly ain't showed no symptoms yet, has she?" she asked, testing one of the buttons as if sceptical of her thread.

"Well, no; not yet. But then Dan seemed as smart as anybody six months ago, and just look at him to-day!"

The mental eyes of a score of women were turned upon Dan, as he was daily seen, round-shouldered and hollow-chested, toiling along the snowy country roads to and from school, coughing as he went. The topic was not an uncongenial one to the members of the sewing-circle, who had really very little to talk about. So absorbed were they, indeed, in the discussion of poor Dan's fate, and of the long list of casualties that had preceded it, that no one noticed the entrance of a young girl, rosy-cheeked and bright-eyed, who had come to help with the supper. There was an air of peculiar freshness about her, and as she stood in her blue dress and white apron near the door, her ruddy brown hair shining in the lamp-light, the effect was like the opening of a window in a close room. Her step was arrested in

the act of coming forward, and, as she paused to listen, the pretty colour was quite blotted out of her cheeks.

"I don't think Dan's will be a lingering case," Mrs. Lapham was saying. "The lingering cases are the most trying."

Polly stood motionless. Was it true then, that which she had dreaded, that which she had shrunk from facing? Was it more than a cold that Dan had got? Was Dan really ill? Her Dan? Really ill? Her heart was beating like a trip-hammer, but no one seemed to hear it.

"Queer that the doctors don't find any cure for lung-trouble," Mrs. Royce was saying. "Seems as though there must be some way of stopping it, if you could only find it out."

"Have you tried Kinderling's Certain Cure?" asked Mrs. Dodge. "They do say that it 's *very* efficacious."

"Well, no," said Mrs. Lapham; "I don't hold much to medicines myself; but if I did I should think it just a wilful waste to try them for Dan. The

boy 's doomed, to begin with, and there 's no help for it."

"There *is* a help for it, there *shall* be a help for it!" cried a voice, vibrating with youthful energy and emotion. "I don't see how you can talk so, Aunt Lucia! Dan *is n't* doomed! he *sha'n't* die! I won't *let* him die!"

The women looked at Polly and then they looked at one another, fairly abashed by the girl's spirit; all, that is, excepting Aunt Lucia, who was not impressionable enough to feel anything but the superficial rudeness of Polly's outbreak.

"That 'll do, Polly," she said, with a spiritless severity. "This is no place for a display of temper."

The colour had come back into the girl's face now, and there were hot tears in her eyes. She turned without a word and left the room, nor was she seen again among the waitresses who came to hand the tea.

Polly was rather ashamed of having run away from the sewing-circle, and she had serious thoughts of going back. It was

the first time in her life that she had allowed herself to be routed by circumstances; but somehow she felt as if she could not find it in her heart to hand about tea and seed-cakes, sandwiches and quince-preserve, to people who could think such dreadful thoughts of Dan. And then, besides, she knew what a pleasant surprise it would be for Dan to have her all to himself for an evening. Uncle Seth would be sure to go for his weekly game of checkers with Deacon White, and she could help Dan with his algebra and Latin, and see that he was warm and "comfy," and perhaps find that he did not cough so much as he did the evening before.

They had a very cozy evening, she and Dan, just as she had planned it in every particular but one, namely, the cough. There was no improvement in that since the night before, and for the first time the boy spoke of it.

"I say, Polly! Is n't it stupid, the way this cold hangs on? Do you remember how long it is since I caught it?"

"Why, no, Dan. It does seem a good while, does n't it? I guess it must be about over by this time. Don't you know how suddenly those things go?"

Dan, who was on his way to bed, had stopped, close to the air-tight stove, to warm his hands.

"I wish it were summer, Polly," he said, with a wistful look in his great black eyes that cut Polly to the heart. "It 's been such a cold winter; and a fellow gets kind of tired of barking all the time."

"It 'll be spring before you know it, Dan, you see if it is n't, and you 'll forget you ever had a cold in your life."

And when, half an hour later, the evening was over, and Polly was safe in her bed, she buried her head in her pillow and cried herself to sleep.

But tears and bewailings were not a natural resource with Polly, whose forte was action. Her first thought in the morning was: what should she do about it? Something must be done, of course, and she was the only one to do it. What it was she had not the faintest idea, but

then it was her business to find out. Here was she, eighteen years old, strong and hearty, and with good practical common sense, the natural guardian and protector of her younger brother. It was time she bestirred herself !

As a first step, she got up with the sun and dressed herself, and then she slipped down-stairs to the parlour where such of her father's books as had been rescued from auction were lodged ; her father had been the village doctor. All the medical works had been sold, and many other volumes besides, but among those remaining was an old encyclopædia which had proved to Polly a mine of information on many subjects. As she took down the third volume, she heard a portentous *Meaouw!* and there, outside the window, stood Mufty, the grey cat, rubbing himself against the frosty pane. Polly opened the window and Mufty sprang in, bringing a puff of frosty air in his wake. Without so much as a word of thanks he walked over to the stove. Finding it, however, cold, as only an empty air-tight stove can be cold, he

strolled, with a disengaged air, beneath which lurked a very distinct intention, toward the only warm object in the room, namely, Polly in her woollen gown. She had the volume open on the table before her, and was deep in its perusal, murmuring as she read.

"Appears to have committed its ravages from the earliest time," Polly read, "and its distribution is probably universal, though far from equal."

At this point Mufty lifted himself lightly in the air, after the manner peculiar to cats, and landed in Polly's lap. After switching his tail across her eyes once or twice, and rubbing himself against the book in rather a disturbing way, he at last settled down, and began purring vigorously in token of satisfaction. The room was very cold, and Polly, without interrupting her reading, was glad to bury her hands in the thick fur. Presently the colour in her cheeks grew brighter and her breath came quicker. There *was* a way, after all! People had been saved, people a good deal sicker than Dan,—saved by a

change of climate. What could be simpler? Just to pick Dan up and carry him off! And such fun, too!

"Mufty," she whispered, excitedly, "Mufty, what should you say to Dan and me going away and never coming back again?"

"*Brrrrr*, *brrrrr*," quoth Mufty.

"I knew you would approve! You know how necessary it is, and you think it best to do it; don't you, Mufty?"

"*Brrrr*, *brrrrrrrrrr*," quoth Mufty, again.

"O Mufty, what a darling you are, to approve! And there is n't really any one's opinion that I care more about!"

She got up and went to the window, while Mufty, not to be dislodged, hastily established himself across her shoulder, his fore paws well down her back, his tail contentedly waving before her eyes. The picture which he thus turned his back upon was a wintry one.

"Cold morning; is n't it, Mufty?" said Polly. "No kind of a climate for a delicate person."

"*Brrrr, brrrrrr!*" Mufty was digging a claw into her shoulder to adjust himself more comfortably.

"Ow!" cried Polly. Then, lifting him down: "Mufty, you're a very intelligent cat, and I haven't a doubt that your judgment is as penetrating as your claws. All the same, I guess you'd better get down and come with me and help Susan get the breakfast. Don't you hear her shaking down the kitchen stove?"

Whereupon Mufty, finding himself dropped upon the coldly unsympathetic ingrain carpet, desisted from further encouraging remarks.

Polly was a schoolgirl still, though she was nearing the dignity of graduation. She had no special taste for study, but she cherished the Yankee reverence for education, and although it was not quite clear to her how Latin declensions and algebraic symbols were to help her in after-life, she committed them to memory with a very good grace, and enjoyed all the satisfaction of work for work's sake.

It happened, therefore, that the pursuit



"Mufty hastily established himself across her shoulder."

"Yes," Polly said to herself, as she sped along the road that glittering winter's day: "Dan is n't just an ordinary boy. He 's an unusual boy. Why, the world could n't *afford* to lose Dan!" and she looked into the faces of the passers-by, as if to challenge their acquiescence in this bold statement.

Whether Dan was all that Polly thought him, only the future could prove,—that future that Polly was about to secure to him. If she idealised him a bit, why, all the better for Dan, and all the better for Polly, too. One thing is sure, that no one who could have looked into the sister's heart that winter's day would have doubted her for an instant when she said to herself:

"He sha' n't die! I won't let him die! But, *oh! how I wish that cough were mine!*"

From her interview with the doctor, Polly brought away with her only one word, "*Colorado*"; and with that word shining like a great snowy peak in her imagination, she took another swift walk

to a farmhouse on the outskirts of the village, where dwelt a man whose son had gone to Colorado three years ago.

"Great place!" he told her; "Great place, Colorado! Mile up in the air! Prairie-dogs and Rocky Mountains! Big cattle ranches that could put all Fieldham in their vest pockets! Cold as thunder, hot as thunder! Blizzards and cyclones and water-spouts! Wind! Blow you right out of your boots! Cures sick folks? Oh, yes. Better than all the doctors. Braces 'em right up—stands 'em on their legs! Nothing like it, so Bill says. Costs a sight to get out there; oh, yes! Fifty dollars and fifteen cents! Queer about that fifteen cents. Seems as though they might ha' throwed that in on such a long trip 's that; but them railroads ain't got no insides any way; and when you once git out there, why, *there you are!*"

The philosophy of that last remark appealed particularly to Polly. "When you once git out there, why, *there you are!*" Somehow it seemed to make everything

perfectly simple and easy. Blizzards and cyclones? Yes, to be sure. But then it was the air that you went out for, Polly reasoned, that was what was going to cure you; and perhaps the more you got of it the quicker you would get cured. And Polly hurried home from her last visit, flushed and eager for the fray. She found her uncle in the barn putting up his horses.

Mr. Seth Lapham was a good man; there could be no doubt about that. Nothing but a sincere and very efficient conscience could have so tempered his natural penuriousness as to cause him to receive into his family a mere sister-in-law's children and allow them to "want for nothing"; that, too, at a time when his own children, John and Martha, were still a bill of expense to him, before their respective marriages. For many years, Uncle Seth had conscientiously, if not lavishly, fed and clothed the little orphans, whose entire patrimony in the Savings Bank scarcely yielded interest enough to pay for their boots and shoes; but it re-

mained for the present crisis to prove him as open-minded as he was conscientious. For, no sooner had Polly finished the rapid exposition of her great plan — how they were to draw the money from the bank to pay for their tickets and start them in their new life, and how they were to earn their own living when once they got started—than he was ready to admit the reasonableness of it.

"And when you once get out there, why, there you are!" Polly declared, in her most convincing tone.

As she stood before him, flushed and breathless, prepared to do battle for Dan to the very last extremity, her uncle gave old Dick a slap that sent him tramping into his stall, and then said, with the drawling accent peculiar to him :

"Well, Polly, you 're a pretty sensible girl. If the doctor says so, I guess it 's wuth trying."

Then Polly, who had so courageously braced herself for the contest, experienced an overwhelming revulsion of feeling, and a great wave of gratitude and compunc-

tion swept over her. To Uncle Seth's speechless astonishment she flung her arms around his big neck, and, with some thing very like a sob, she cried :

"Oh, Uncle Seth, I never loved you half enough!"

Uncle Seth bore it very well, all things considered. He got pretty red in the face, but happily a full grizzly beard kept the secret of his blushes.

"Why, Polly!" he said, pounding away on her shoulder in an attempt to be consolatory; "you've always ben a good girl; not a mite of trouble, not a mite!"

They walked up to the house, Polly holding the rough, hairy hand as tightly as if it had been a solid chunk of gold. Before the short walk to the kitchen door was finished they had become sworn conspirators, and Uncle Seth was so entirely in the spirit of the piece that he held Polly back a minute to say, in a sepulchral whisper,

"Just you leave your Aunt Lucia to me. I'll fix her."

Polly never knew all the pains Uncle

Seth was at to "fix" Aunt Lucia, but by hook or crook the "fixing" was accomplished, and Aunt Lucia had given a mournful consent.

"I should n't feel it right," she declared, "to let you suppose I thought there was any hope of its curing Dan. That boy's doomed, if ever a boy was, and I don't know how you 'll ever manage with the funeral and all, way out there in Colorado, far from kith and kin. But your Uncle Seth says you 'd better try it, and I ain't one to oppose just for the sake of opposin'. I 've been through too much for that. Only I warn you ; mind, you don't forget I warned you."

Polly listened to Aunt Lucia's lugubrious views with scarcely a twinge of alarm, and in five minutes she had plunged into preparations for the journey.

As for Dan, the mere thought of Colorado seemed to revive him. "Larks" of any description had always been very much to his taste, but the unending "lark" of an escape into the big world with Polly filled him with a fairly riotous joy.

And so it happened that by the time the March thaws were setting in and the March winds were getting ready for their boisterous attack, Polly and Dan had slipped away, and were travelling as fast as steam could carry them toward the high, health-giving region of the Rocky Mountains.

"A harebrained venture as ever was!" Miss Louisa Bailey declared when she heard of it. "I don't see what Mr. and Mrs. Lapham were thinking of, to countenance such a step!"

The monthly sewing-circle had come round again, and Mrs. Lapham, whose turn it was to look after the supper, had stepped out of the room for a moment.

"Well, I don't know but it 's about as well," the Widow Criswell rejoined, sighing profoundly. She was more out of spirits than usual to-day, for circumstances, otherwise known as Mrs. Royce, the president of the sewing-circle, had forced into her hands a baby's pinafore, the cheerful suggestiveness of which could only serve to deepen her gloom. "The

boy 's doomed, wherever he is, and Sister Lapham never had any real taste for sick-nursing. She 's spared a sight o' trouble and expense."

"*Well*," said Mrs. Henry Dodge, winding a needleful of No. 20 thread off the spool, with the hissing sound familiar to the ears of the seamstress, and breaking it off with a snap, "*I* think it 's the very *best* thing that could have been *done*. The minute I *saw* that girl's face last sewing-circle, I *knew* she 'd make out to *save that boy*. Mark my words, he 'll outlive us all *yet !* I declare, I always *did* like Polly Fitch. She reminds me of *myself* when *I* was a girl !"

CHAPTER II

WESTWARD HO!

"PIKE'S Peak or Bust!" was the chosen motto of those early pilgrims who, thirty-odd years ago, crossed the continent in a "prairie schooner," escorted by a cavalry guard to keep Indian marauders at a respectful distance; and "Pike's Peak or Bust!" was the motto chosen by Polly and Dan, our two young modern pilgrims, as they journeyed with greater ease, but with no less courage and venturesomeness, across the two thousand miles intervening between quiet Fieldham and their goal.

"Pike's Peak or Bust!" No one looking into the bright young faces turned so bravely westward ho! could have had any doubt as to which of the two alternatives hinted at in that picturesque motto

would be fulfilled for them. On they journeyed, on and on, past populous cities, across great rivers, over vast plains brown with last year's stubble or white with newly fallen snow, till at last there came a morning when they awoke in the tingling dawn, and, looking forth across miles of shadowy prairie, beheld a great white dome cut clear against a sapphire sky. On the train rushed, on and on, straight toward that snowy dome, and, as they drew nearer, other mountains began to define themselves on either side the central peak, and presently a town revealed itself, and they knew that it could be no other than Colorado Springs, sleeping there at the foot of the great range, all unconscious of the two young pilgrims, coming so confidingly to seek their fortunes within its borders.

Their first spring and summer were a very happy time, of which Polly and Dan could relate a hundred noteworthy incidents. They rented a tiny cottage of three rooms in the unfashionable part of the town where rents were low. Here

was a bit of ground all about, and a narrow porch that looked straight into the face of the splendid old Peak; and here they lived the merriest of lives on the smallest and most precarious of incomes; for they were determined to infringe as little as possible upon the slender capital, snugly stowed away in a Colorado bank.

Dan soon found employment in a livery-stable at fifty cents a day. His chief business was the agreeable one of delivering "teams" and saddle-horses to pleasure-seekers at the north end of the town, riding back to the stable again on a "led horse" provided for the purpose. If not a very ambitious calling, it was, at least, exceedingly good fun, and it also had the merit of conforming to the doctor's directions. "Don't let him get behind a counter or into any stuffy back-office," the doctor had said to Polly. "Whatever he does, let it keep him in the open air as much as possible." Had the very obvious wisdom of this advice required demonstration, Dan's rapid improvement would have been sufficient.

They did not shock the sensibilities of the sewing-circle by writing home exactly what the employment was that Dan had found, while, for themselves, Polly had her own little ways of embellishing the somewhat prosaic situation. She dubbed the young stable-boy Hercules, and always spoke of the establishment he served as "The Augæans." Nor did her invention fail when, a month or two later, Dan got a place at somewhat higher wages as druggist's messenger; for then he was promptly informed that his name was Mercury, and that there were wings on his heels, though he could not himself see them, by reason of their being turned back, and visible only when his feet were in rapid motion!

Meanwhile, Polly, too, was doing her part, though it had not yet proved very lucrative. When they first took the house, Dan painted a sign for her, bearing the following announcement:

FINE NEEDLEWORK AND EMBROIDERY TO ORDER.

But the spring and summer went by, and autumn came, and still the sign which

had ornamented their house-front for so many months had as yet attracted the notice of only the impecunious class of customers their immediate neighbourhood afforded. Polly had gratefully taken coarse work at low prices, but she still hoped for better things. The street where their tiny cottage stood, though at the wrong end of the town, was a thoroughfare for pleasure parties driving to the great cañons, and Polly never saw the approach of a pretty turnout without a thrill of hope that the occupants might be attracted by her sign. She knew herself to be a quick and skilful needlewoman, and she thought that if only she might once get started in well-paid work, Dan, who was growing stronger every day, might go on with his education at the Colorado College Preparatory School. She had found out all about the college, of which she had formed a very high opinion, and she told herself proudly that Dan had such a good mind that he would not need to study too hard.

One evening in September they were

clearing the supper table, preparatory to washing up the dishes, which ceremony was one of the numerous "larks" by which brother and sister found life diversified and enlivened.

"Mercury, I have an idea!" Polly suddenly cried.

"Never saw the time you had n't, Polly."

"But this is a great idea, a really great one, because it includes all the little ones, like Milton's universe in the crescent moon; don't you remember?"

"My goody, Polly! But it must be a corker!"—and Dan was all attention.

Now Polly, it is needless to repeat, was a young person of ideas; that was her strong point, and Dan at least considered her a marvel of ingenuity and invention. Their tiny sitting-room, where Dan slept, was a witness to her taste and originality. There were picturesque shelves which Dan had made in accordance with her directions; there were cheesecloth window-curtains, with rustic boughs in place of poles; there were barrels standing bottom

upward for tables, draped with ancient "duds"—a changeable-silk skirt of her mother's over one, a moth-eaten camel's-hair shawl over another. The crack in the only mirror which a munificent landlord had provided was concealed by a kinikinick vine; a piece of Turkey-red at five cents a yard, their one bit of extravagance, converted Dan's cot-bed into a canopy of state. And having heard Dan chant the praises of her "ideas" with gratifying persistence for a month past, Polly had begun to wonder whether they might not be turned to account.

"What's the latest idea, Polly?" Dan asked, seizing a dripping handful of what they were pleased to call their "family plate."

"Well, Dan, I want you to paint something more on my sign. Only two words; it won't take you long."

"What two words?"

"*Also Ideas!*"

Dan reflected a moment, and then he proceeded to dance a jig of delight, wildly waving his dish-cloth about Polly's head.

"Polly, you beat the world!" he cried.

A house-painter lived next door, from whom Dan borrowed paint and brushes, and before they slept the old sign was further decorated with two magic words done in brilliant scarlet. The inscription now read:

FINE NEEDLEWORK AND EMBROIDERY TO ORDER.
ALSO IDEAS.

There was something positively dazzling about those two words in flaming scarlet, and Polly and Dan stepped out twice in the course of their early breakfast to have a look at them.

"Don't you feel scared, Polly?" asked Dan, as he left her at her dish-washing.

"Scared? Not I!" and she walked down the path with him, drying her hands on a dish-towel.

It was a delicious morning in late September; the air dry and sparkling as a jewel, the mountains baring their shoulders to the morning sun. The Peak had already a dash of winter on his crown, but the barren slope of rock below looked like

an impregnable fortress. Polly and Dan were never tired of wondering at the changing moods that played so gloriously upon that steadfast front.

"Seems as if they must almost see him from Fieldham this morning; he's so bright," said Polly.

"That's so," Dan agreed. "I say, Polly; is n't he enjoying himself, though?"

"Course he is!" Polly answered. "Is n't everybody?"

Then Polly went back to her splashing water and flopping dish-towels, and was busy for an hour about the house. By and bye she sat herself down in the little porch and proceeded to put good honest stitches into a child's frock, for the making of which she was to receive twenty-five cents. Not very good pay for a day's work, but "twenty-five-hundred-million per cent. better than nothing," as she had assured the doubtful Dan.

Life looked very different to her since those two bright words had been added to the sign. Not that it had looked otherwise than pleasant before; but there was

so little originality in the idea of doing needlework that it had scarcely merited success, while this,—of course it must succeed!

In truth, she had sat there hardly an hour, when she distinctly heard the occupant of a yellow buckboard read the sign, and then turn to her companion with a word of comment. Polly had always had an idea that one of those yellow buckboards would be the making of her fortune yet. The one in question was drawn by a pretty pair of ponies, and two young girls were in possession of it.

"I have an idea they'll notice it again, when they come back this way," Polly surmised. "But if they're going up the cañon they won't come back till just as I'm getting dinner."

And, sure enough, the mutton stew was just beginning to simmer, when there came a rap at the door.

The front door opened directly into the little sitting-room, and was never closed in pleasant weather. As Polly emerged from the kitchen, her face very red from

hobnobbing with the stove, she found one of the girls of the yellow buckboard standing in the doorway.

"Good morning, Miss——"

"Fitch. My name is Polly Fitch."

"What a jolly name!" the visitor exclaimed. "I think you must be the one with ideas."

"Yes," said Polly, "Do you want one? Come in and take a seat."

"I do want an idea most dreadfully," the young lady rejoined, taking the proffered chair. "I want something for a booby prize for a backgammon tournament. I don't suppose anybody ever heard of a backgammon tournament before, but it's going to be great fun. We are doing it to take the conceit out of a young man we know, who declares that there's nothing in backgammon that he didn't learn the first time he played it with his grandfather."

"And you want a booby prize?" Polly looked thoughtful for the space of sixteen seconds. Then she cried; "Oh, I have an idea! Get somebody to whittle you a

couple of wooden dice; then paint them white and mark them with black sixes on each of the six sides of each die. You could call it '*a booby pair-o'-dice*' if you don't object to puns!"

"What a good idea! It's simply perfect! I wonder whom I could get to do it for me?"

"Why, Dan could do it with his jack-knife, just as well as not. If you 'll come to-morrow morning you shall have them."

Accordingly, the next morning, the young lady appeared, and was enchanted with her prize.

"And how much will they be?" she asked.

"Well, I had thought of charging twenty-five cents for an idea, and the dice did n't cost us anything and only took a few minutes to make."

"Supposing we call it a dollar. Would that be fair?"

"I don't believe they are worth a dollar."

"Yes, they are; I should be ashamed to take them for less. What a splendid

idea that was of yours, to put out that sign!"

"I should think it was, if I could get any more customers like you!"

"I'll send them to you,—never you fear!"

Miss Beatrice Compton returned to her buckboard a captive to Polly.

"She's the sweetest thing," she told her mother, who chanced to be her passenger on this occasion. "She's got eyes and hair exactly of a colour, a sort of reddish brown, and her eyes twinkle at you in the dearest way, and she wears her hair in the quaintest pug, just in the right place on her head, sort of up in the air; and she's a lady, too; anybody can see that. I wonder who 'Dan' is; you don't suppose she's married, do you?"

"You can't tell," Mrs. Compton replied. "Persons in that walk of life marry very young."

"But, Mamma, she is n't a 'person,' and she does n't belong to 'that walk of life.' She's a lady."

Miss Beatrice was as good as her word,

and three days had not passed when a horseman stopped before the little cottage, sprang from his horse, and looked about for a place to tie; there was no hitching-post near by. Polly was sitting in the porch making buttonholes.

"If you were coming in here, you'd better lead him right up the walk," she said, "and tie him to the porch-post."

"That's a good idea!" the young man replied, promptly acting upon the advice. "You are Miss Polly Fitch, are you not?"

"Yes."

"I knew you the minute I saw you, because Miss Compton described you to me." This was meant to be very flattering, but Polly, who seldom missed a point, was quite unconscious that one had been made.

"Have you come for an idea?" she asked, quite innocently, and Mr. Reginald Axton, who was rather sensitive, wondered whether she "meant anything." On second thoughts he concluded that she did not, and he began again:

"I got that booby prize you made."

"Did you?" cried Polly, with anima-

tion. "Oh, I wonder whether you were the one—" she paused.

"The one that what?" he asked hastily.

"The one that thought there was n't anything in the game."

"Well, yes, I was. And the others had all the luck, and so of course I got beaten."

"Of course!" said Polly, with a twinkle of delight.

"I see you 're on their side, but all the same I want you to help me to pay them back. You see I wanted to do something about it, and I thought of sending Miss Compton some flowers with a verse, and I thought perhaps you could do the verse."

"Did you expect me to furnish the idea, too?"

"Why, of course! That 's why I came to you. I thought, if you were so awfully bright, perhaps you could make verses."

Polly looked thoughtful.

"I should charge you quite a lot for it," she said,—"much as a dollar perhaps; for you know writing verses is quite an accomplishment."

"I 'll pay a dollar a line for it! I know a fellow that gets more than that from the magazines. And I 'm sure that it will be good if you do it."

"My gracious! that 's great pay!" cried Polly, with sparkling eyes, ignoring the compliment, but enchanted to hear what a price verses brought. "I 'll send it to you by mail."

"No, I guess I 'll look in every once in a while and see how you 're getting on!"

"Dear me!" said Polly, "you don't expect me to spend a week over it, do you? That is n't why you offered such high pay?"

"Oh, no; the quicker you got it done the more I should be willing to pay for it." He paused a moment. "And, Miss Fitch," he went on, "I don't care if you make it a little,—well,—a little soft. She deserves it, she 's such a tease! Her name 's Beatrice," he added. "We call her Trix, if that 'll help you any."

Polly understood Mr. Reginald perfectly, and she dismissed him with a twinkle which promised well. Then Polly

proceeded to cudgel her brain, while the needle went in and out, and a buttonhole formed itself in the firm, narrow line that makes of a buttonhole a work of art.

"I wish I could rhyme words as well as I can stitches," Polly thought to herself, as she held up a completed buttonhole, with the honest pride of a good workman. "Sixes,—Trixes! that heart were Trix's! That ought to be made to go. A double rhyme, too! I don't believe he expects a double rhyme." And in and out and in and out her thoughts plied themselves round and about the two words, and her cheeks got quite hot with the pleasurable excitement of this new mental exercise.

At last she tossed down her work, and, fetching a piece of brown wrapping-paper, proceeded, with many erasures and tinkerings, to inscribe upon it the following verse:

Were hearts the dice and love the game,
Of no avail were double sixes;
On every heart is but one name,
We nought could throw but *double-Trixes!*

"Rather neat," said Polly to herself,

"rather neat! Now if he were to send it with two bunches of roses of six each, I think it could not fail to make an impression. I should rather hate to pay another person to make love for me, though," she went on, with a little toss of the head; and then she picked up her work and began again to "rhyme buttonholes."

When Dan came home to supper he had much to learn. He was lost in wonder over the rhyme which Polly repeated to him, but still more impressed by the four great silver dollars she had to show; for her impatient customer had already called for the verses.

"Jiminy!" cried Dan; "that's most a week's earnings for some of us!"

"Yes," Polly replied, demurely; "that's what Mrs. O'Toole would have paid me for sixteen baby-dresses. Things even themselves out in the long run; don't they, Dan?" As though Polly knew anything about the long run, by the way!

Before Christmas Polly was driving a pretty trade, not only in ideas but in

sewing. She had in all ten dozen pocket handkerchiefs to mark for Christmas customers, besides towels and table-linen, sheets and pillow-cases. People had found her out, and she had to refuse more than one good order for lack of time. But needlework alone, quick as she was in doing it, would have given her but a meagre income, had she not been able to furnish "also ideas."

One lady, for instance, came to ask her for an "idea" for a Thanksgiving dinner, and Polly not only suggested the idea, but carried it out for her. She went about with a big basket to all the markets and collected perfect specimens of vegetables with which to make a centrepiece for the dinner table. The dinner was given in a house where the round dining table would seat twenty-four guests. In this ample centre she erected a pyramid of fruits of the earth. There were crimson beets, pale yellow squashes, scarlet tomatoes, and the long, thin fingers of the string-bean; potatoes furnished a comfortable brown, which, together with the soft

bronze of the onion, harmonized discordant colours; and, crowning all, the silken tassel of the red-eared corn raised its graceful crest.

The hostess was delighted with her table, and more delighted still with the pretty decorator. Polly's fame flew from one to another throughout that kindly and prosperous community, and she found herself accumulating a goodly hoard. As Christmas drew near, many a perplexed shopper came to her for "ideas," and all went away content. She had long since discovered that the Colorado shops were treasure-houses of pretty things. She never passed a jeweller's window without taking note of his latest novelties; she kept an eye upon Mexican and Indian bazaars, and Chinese bric-à-brac collections; she made a study of Colorado gems, and knew where the prizes lay hidden; she ran through the books in the bookstores; she was alert for new inventions in harness decoration and bridle trimmings; she gave hints for fancy-work of divers kinds.

Mercury, meanwhile, sped about the town, dispensing healing, as Polly often reminded him, and "getting more than I dispense, Polly," he would declare in return. "I feel so well that everything is a regular lark!"

And so Dan made a "lark" of his work, and trotted all day in his capacity of Mercury, little dreaming of the wealth that was accumulating for his use; while Polly went on with her hoarding, of which she made a great secret, and thought of a still better time coming.

CHAPTER III

A MERRY CHRISTMAS

OF all Polly's new friends, not one took a warmer interest in the young idea-vendor than that first customer of hers, Miss Beatrice Compton. Miss Beatrice was a warm-hearted and enthusiastic girl, who never did anything by halves; and when she talked of Polly, of Polly's skill and of Polly's originality, when she extolled Polly's eyes and Polly's hair, Polly's wit and Polly's sweetness, few listeners remained quite unmoved and incurious. Among the many who were thus stirred to seek out this youthful paragon, was Miss Compton's brother-in-law, Mr. Horace Clapp. Nor was an idle curiosity his only motive in taking the step. Beneath the pretext he found for paying the visit lurked a rather shamefaced

purpose of doing this "plucky little genius" a good turn.

It happened, therefore, one morning in December, that Polly came home from her marketing to find a stranger sitting in her porch. A dog-cart, driven by a groom in livery, was passing and repassing her door; and one look at the occupant of the porch sufficed to fix the connection between the two. He was a well-dressed man of thirty or more, who rose as she opened the gate and saluted her as if she had been a duchess.

"Miss Polly Fitch?" he inquired, as he stood before her, hat in hand.

It was noticeable that no one ever omitted the "Polly" from the girl's name. It seemed as much a part of her as the ruddy hair and the dimple in her chin. That dimple, by the way, should have been mentioned long ago; but that, in its turn, was so essential a feature, that one would as soon think it necessary to state that Polly's nose had an upward tilt as that her chin had a dimple. Any one who had ever heard of Polly must know

that her nose would tilt and her chin have a dimple.

Polly had a large market-basket on her arm, and as she felt in her pocket for the key to the front door, her visitor took possession of the basket. She was a good deal impressed by the attention from so magnificent a personage, and one, moreover, of advanced years. She began to think that she must be mistaken about his being thirty; why, that was Cousin John's age, and Cousin John was quite an oldish man. She motioned her visitor to enter, and it must be admitted that there was no oppressive reverence in her tone as she said:

"If you would tell me *your* name, now we should be starting fair!"

"My name is Horace Clapp. Did you ever hear of me?"

"No, I don't think so. Ought I to have?"

"Well, no, there's no obligation in the matter. I only had an idea that I was a local celebrity, like you."

"Like me?"

"Yes! You're a surprise to the town and so am I."

"What have you done to surprise the town?" asked Polly, filled with curiosity.

"I've only got rich very fast."

"Why, so have I!" said Polly. "We *are* a good deal alike."

"Really? Then you will be in an even better position to advise me than I thought for."

"I *supposed* you had come for an idea," said Polly, as naturally as if her wares had consisted in tape and buttons.

Offering her visitor the only fairly comfortable chair in the room, she seated herself by the window, near which was one of the draped barrels with her work-basket on top.

"You won't mind my sewing, please," she said, picking up a bit of embroidery; "I can think better that way."

The new customer meanwhile was wondering whether Miss Polly would guess that he had come partly from curiosity, and partly with that other far more daring motive of finding a way to do her a serv-

ice. And yet, who could tell? Perhaps she *could* give him a hint; perhaps she *was* the youthful sibyl people seemed half inclined to believe her.

"Miss Polly," he said, leaning forward in his chair, with his elbows on his knees, —"Miss Polly, I've got an awful lot of money, and I don't know what to do with it."

Mere words had not often the power of staying Polly's needle, but at this astounding declaration she actually let her work fall in her lap, and gazed with wide-eyed wonder at the speaker.

"Yes," he went on, "I really want to do some good with it, and I've tried in lots of ways and I've never hit it off. I should just like to tell you about some of the things I've made a fizzle of in the last year,—if it would n't bore you?"

"Oh, no, it would n't bore me; nothing ever does. Only,—I can't understand it. Why, I think I could give away *a thousand dollars a year* just there at home, where we used to live, and every dollar of it would be well spent!"

"Yes, Miss Polly," he said very meekly, "but, you see, what I've got to consider is *two hundred thousand* dollars a year!"

He looked positively ashamed of himself, and Polly did not wonder. She had given a little gasp at mention of the sum; then she shook her head with decision. Polly knew her limits.

"I haven't any ideas big enough for that" she said. "I should as soon think of advising the President of the United States!"

"Well, if you won't advise me about mine, perhaps you will tell me what you are going to do with your own riches. You said you were getting rich, did you not? You know," he added, "it isn't necessary to make the map of a State as big as the State itself."

"You have ideas, too," Polly remarked appreciatively, resuming her embroidery.

"But you have not told me how you are going to use your riches."

"Oh, I'm going to use mine for education."

"Going up to the college?" he asked.

"Oh, no; there'd be no good in my knowing a lot. I've been nearly through the Fieldham High School already, and the little that I've learned does n't seem to stick very well. No, indeed! I'm going to—" she paused with a feeling of loyalty to Dan—"I'm only going to help on the general cause of education," she finished demurely.

As she made this sphinx-like remark, Mr. Horace Clapp wished she would relinquish the pursuit of wealth long enough to put her work down and let him see exactly what she meant.

"I think that is the best use to put money to," he said gravely, "but I'm not in the way of knowing about people who need help. Could n't you tell me of somebody, some young man who wanted to go to college, or some girl who would like to go abroad? Of course, I could found a scholarship, or endow a 'chair,' but one likes a bit of the personal element in one's work."

Polly's heart gave a thump. Here was a chance for Dan; a word from her was

all that was needed to make his path an easy one. Had she a right to withhold that word,—to cramp and hinder him? She did not speak for a good many seconds; she simply plied her needle with more and more diligence, while her breath came fast and unevenly. Suddenly a furious blush went mounting up into her temples and spread itself down her neck. Her visitor thought he had never seen any one blush like that, and it somehow struck him that his little plan was swamped. Quite right he was, too. Polly blushed to think that she had thought of Dan in such a connection for a single instant.

It was very unreasoning, this impulse of rebellious shame: are we not admonished to help one another? And what could the helpers do if all their benefactions were indignantly thrust back? Very unreasoning indeed, but natural!—natural as the colour of her hair and the quickness of her wit, natural as all the graces and virtues, all the misconceptions and foibles, that went to make up the personality of Polly Fitch,—of Polly Fitch, the daughter

of Puritan ancestors; men and women who could starve, body and mind, but who never had learned to accept a charity.

Before the flush had died away, Polly was quite herself again, and looked up so brightly and sweetly that Mr. Clapp took heart of hope.

"You do know somebody like that; I 'm sure you do!" he said insinuatingly.

"I?" said Polly. "I know hardly anybody. But I 'm sure the president of the college could tell you of a dozen boys who would be grateful for help."

And so Mr. Horace Clapp's little plan had come to nought, and he took his leave more than ever convinced that it is a very difficult thing to spend one's money in a good cause. As he stood a moment, waiting for his dog-cart, a boy came down the street with a parcel under his arm.

"Say, Mister, do you know whether Daniel Fitch lives here?" he asked.

"Daniel Fitch?" thought Mr. Clapp, as the boy turned in at the gate. "Daniel Fitch? Where have I heard that name? Oh, yes, Beatrice said there was a brother;

runs errands for Jones, the druggist. Plucky children! It would be pleasant to give them a lift!"

As for Polly, she had not a twinge of regret. In fact, she rather enjoyed dwelling upon the splendour of the opportunity she had thrust from her, the better to glory in her escape. And she looked forward with entire confidence to the time when she should test Dan's feeling on the point.

On Christmas Eve they hung up their stockings, fairly bulging with materialised jokes and ideas which the morning was to bring to light, and we may be sure that they did not wait for the lazy winter sun to put in an appearance before beginning their investigations. Amid shouts of merriment the revelations of a remarkably inventive Santa Claus were greeted, while Polly held her climbing excitement in check until the hour should be ripe for greater things. But when, at last, just as the sun was peeping in at the kitchen window, Dan's ferret fingers penetrated the extreme toe of his sock, she grew so agi-

tated that she quite forgot to make a certain witty observation she had been saving up for that particular moment. And so it came about that an unwonted silence reigned as the unsuspecting Dan drew forth a small flat parcel labelled: "A Merry Christmas from Polly."

Within was their familar bank-book, wrapped about with a less familiar sheet of note-paper bearing the following inscription:

"An Idea! Namely, to wit: That Daniel Reddiman Fitch, Esq., lay aside his character of Mercury, and become a student at Colorado College!

"P. S.—An examination of the within balance will assure the said Dan that there is nothing to prevent his thus delighting the heart of his faithful Polly."

A glance at the balance recorded, a reperusal of the "idea," and the impressive silence was broken into a thousand fragments.

"For you see, Dan," Polly explained, when, at last, she had secured a hearing, "I should n't know what in the world to

do with so much money,—some rich people don't, they say,—and I 've got plenty of ideas to last us for years to come. Then, just as they begin to give out, you 'll have got to be a mining engineer, with your pockets cram-full of money, and you 'll have to support me for the rest of my life. So I don't see but that I 'm getting the best of the bargain, after all!"

It all seemed perfectly natural to Dan. This sister of his had always lent a hand when he needed it. Of course he would accept her help, and let the future, the glorious, inexhaustible future straighten out the account between them. He did not express himself even in his inmost thoughts in any such high-flown manner as this. He simply gave an Indian war-whoop, administered to Polly a portentous hug, and declared for the hundredth time, "Polly, you *beat the world!*"

When everything was thus amicably settled and Dan had agreed to "give notice" in his capacity as Mercury, the following day, Polly said: "You won't mind

being poor, will you, Dan? You don't wish we were rich, do you?"

"Rich? Why, we *are* rich!"

"But, Dan, if any one came along and offered you a lot of money, say a thousand dollars a year, you would n't take it, would you?"

"Do you mean a stranger, Polly, some one we had n't any claim on?"

"Yes; but somebody who had such a lot he would n't miss it. Would you take it, Dan? Say, would you take it?"

"What a goose you are, Polly! Of course I would n't take it! I would rather go back to the Augæans for the rest of my life!"

On the evening of that momentous Christmas Day, our two young people had out their Latin books and began industriously to polish up their somewhat rusty acquirements in that classic tongue. A year ago they might not have regarded this as precisely a holiday pastime, but their ideas had undergone a great change since then.

They sat at the little centre-table, the

ruddy head and the black one close together in the lamp-light, reading their Cicero. A rap at the door seemed a rude interruption; yet so unusual was the excitement of an evening visitor that they could not be quite indifferent to the event, — the less so when the visitor proved to be Polly's client of the cumbrous income.

"Good evening, Miss Polly," he called, from the door, and Polly fancied that his voice had a particularly cheerful ring in it. As he spoke, he glanced at Dan, who had opened the door.

"This is my brother, Dan. Won't you come in, Mr. Clapp?"

"With all the pleasure in the world, for I have come in the character of Santa Claus."

"Have you indeed?" thought Polly to herself; "we'll see about that!" Perhaps there was something in her manner that betrayed her thoughts, for her visitor said, with evident amusement:

"You take alarm too easily, Miss Polly. I should as soon think of offering a gift in

my own name to,—to any other extremely rich young woman."

"I was glad to hear that your brother's name was Dan," he continued with apparent irrelevance, as he took his seat. "And more delighted still when I found out his middle name. Did n't it strike you," he asked, turning abruptly to Dan, "that your employer, Mr. Jones, was developing rather a sudden interest in your antecedents?"

"Yes," Polly thought, "he is pleased about something."

"Why, yes," Dan answered, with boyish bluntness. "But what do you know about it?"

"Only that it was I that put Jones up to making his inquiries."

"You?" Dan looked half inclined to resent the liberty. But Polly saw that there was something coming.

"Would you mind telling us what it 's all about?" she asked. "You look as if you knew something nice."

"I do; it 's one of the nicest things I ever knew in my life. I did n't tell you

the other day, did I, that I had made most of my money in mines?"

"No," said Polly, wondering why he should want to tell them how he made "his old money."

"Well, that is the case; nearly all in one mine, too. It's a great placer mine up north. I don't suppose you know much about placer mines?"

Polly, disclaiming such knowledge, tried to look politely interested, while Dan's interest, fortunately for his manners, was very genuine. Was he not to be a mining engineer, and did he not want to learn all he could?

"Well," Mr. Clapp went on, "a placer mine is one where the gold lies embedded in the soil and has to be washed out, and if there does n't happen to be running water near by it costs an awful lot to bring it in."

"Yes," said the polite Polly, with a vision of a fire-brigade running about with buckets in their hands, as they used to do do in Fieldham.

"What they call hydraulic mining," Dan put in.

"Yes, that's it. Big ditches to be dug, and all that sort of thing. Well, this 'Big Bonus Mine' was discovered twenty years ago. A company was started and the stock was put on the market at a dollar a share. The management made a mess of it, as a management usually does, and it fizzled out. It was believed that the thing was chock-full of gold, but they could n't get it out."

Polly was beginning to be interested; she usually did find things interesting when she gave her mind to them.

"Well, what did they do?" asked Dan.

"They gave it up for a bad job, and tried to forget all the money they had put into it."

"Then where did your money come from?"

"Out of the 'Big Bonus Placer Gold Mine!' We scoop it right out to-day."

"I wish you 'd go ahead!" said Dan, for the guest had paused, and was examining the *Cicero*.

"Well, hydraulic mining improves, like every thing else, and three years ago a

new company was formed. Luckily the old company had not gone into debt; perhaps they could not borrow money on their elephant. However that may be, they agreed to put half their stock back into the treasury, and it was sold at fifty cents a share, which gave us money to work with."

"And it was a howling success!" cried Dan. "I remember; I've heard all about it."

"Yes, we've paid out two dollars a share in dividends in the last six months, and the stock is held at fifteen or sixteen dollars a share to-day. The beauty of it is," Mr. Horace Clapp added, glancing quietly from Dan to Polly, "I am convinced that you are both stockholders."

"We?" they cried in a breath.

"Yes! For Jones tells me that your father was a doctor; that his name was Daniel Reddiman Fitch, and that he once lived in Bington, Ohio."

"Yes," said Polly; "that was when he was first married; before old Doctor Royce died, and left an opening in Field-

ham, so that Father came back home again."

"The name of such a stockholder stands on our books, but we have n't heretofore been able to trace him."

"That 's why old Jones pumped me so," Dan remarked, giving his mind first to the more familiar aspects of the case.

"What a pity he never knew!" said Polly, with glistening eyes. "He was always so poor."

"Your father's original holdings were five thousand shares, so that you are the possessors of twenty-five hundred shares. If you sell it pretty soon, as I think you may as well do, you will have something over forty thousand dollars to invest; for there is, in addition to the stock, five thousand dollars in back dividends due you."

Dan and Polly looked at each other almost aghast; but that was only for a moment.

"Why, Dan, you can have a saddle-horse of your own!" cried Polly.

"And so can you!"

"And we can— O Mr. Clapp, how rude we are!"

Mr. Clapp looked as if it were a kind of rudeness that he was enjoying very much. As he rose to go, he said:

"Don't you think I'm a pretty good sort of a Santa Claus after all, Miss Polly?"

Polly seized his outstretched hand.

"I did n't believe any one person could be so rich, and so good, too!" she declared.

"And, O Dan!" cried Polly, the minute they were alone together, "let's send a New-Year's box home. There 'll be just time enough. We can get one of those great carriage rugs for Uncle Seth, and a China silk for Aunt Lucia."

"And I 'll send Cousin John's boys some Indian bows and arrows."

"And Cousin Martha a dozen Chinese cups and saucers."

"And the old Professor a meerschaum pipe."

"And Miss Louisa Bailey, and dear Mrs. Dodge, and the Widow Criswell, —what *shall* we send the Widow Criswell, Dan?"

"Some black-bordered pocket-handkerchiefs!" cried the irreverent Dan.

Before going to bed they stepped out on the porch to bid the Peak good-night.

"Going to be a fine day to-morrow, Polly."

"All the days are fine in Colorado," said Polly.

"You forget the blizzard last month."

"Oh, but it was *such a dear blizzard* not to do you any harm when it caught you out!"

Dan grew thoughtful.

"Do you ever think, Polly, that we should never have come out here if it had n't been for you?"

"You know it was 'Pike's Peak or bust!' with both of us, Dan."

Dan looked critically from the great Peak, gleaming there in the starlight, to Polly's uplifted face, and then, as they turned to go in, he exclaimed, for the hundred-and-first time:

"Polly, *you beat the world!*"

Nannie's Theatre Party

NANNIE'S THEATRE PARTY

"YES, my dear, I went to the the*ett*er myself once when I was quite a girl, younger 'n you be, I guess. 'T was Uncle 'Bijah Lane that took me, 'n' he was so upsot by their hevin' a fun'ral all acted out on the stage, that he come home and told Ma 't wa' n't no fit place for young girls to go to, 'n' I ain't never ben inside a the*ett*er sence. Doos seem good to see play-actin' agin after all these years, I declare it doos!"—and Miss Becky took up her sewing, which she had laid down in a moment of enthusiasm.

"If you liked it half as well as I like to do it, Miss Becky, you'd like it even better than you do now," replied Lady Macbeth, with a cheerful gusto, somewhat at odds with her tragic character.

Nannie Ray, herself still very new to

the delights of theatre-going, had recently seen a great actress play Lady Macbeth, and, fired with the spirit of emulation, she had been enacting the sleep-walking scene for the benefit of her country neighbour. Miss Becky Crawlin lived only half a mile down the road from the old Ray homestead, where the family were in the habit of spending six months of the year. She and Nannie had always been great cronies, Miss Becky finding a perennial delight in "that child's goin's on."

The "child" meanwhile had come to be sixteen years old, but no one would have given her credit for such dignity who had seen the incongruous little figure perched upon the slippery haircloth sofa, twinkling with delight at Miss Becky's encomiums. She wore a voluminous nightgown, from under the hem of which a pink gingham ruffle insisted upon poking itself out; her long black hair hung over her shoulders in sufficiently tragic strands; her cheeks, liberally powdered with flour, gleamed treacherously pink through a

chance break in their highly artificial pallor, while portentous brows of burnt cork did their best to make terrible a pair of very girlish and innocent eyes. A touch of realism which the original Lady Macbeth lacked was given by a streak of red crayon which lent a murderous significance to the small brown hand.

"I declare!" her admiring auditor went on, stitching away to make up for lost time, "I can't see but you do 's well 's the lady I saw—only she was dressed prettier, and went round with a wreath on her head. A wreath 's always so becomin'! We used to wear 'em May Day, when I was a girl. They was made o' paper flowers, all colours, so 's you could suit your complexion, and when it did n't rain I must say we looked reel nice. 'T was surprisin', though, how quick a few drops o' rain would wilt one o' them paper wreaths right down so 's you could scurcely tell what 't was meant for."

"Tell me some more about the girl with the wreath, Miss Becky," said Lady Macbeth, longing to curl herself up in a

corner, but too mindful of her tragic dignity to unbend.

"Well, she looked reel pretty, but she did n't hev *sperit* enough to suit my idees. She was kind o' lackadaisical and namby-pamby, 'n' when her young man sarsed her she did n't seem to hev nothin' to say for herself. I must say 't was a heathenish kind of a play anyway, 'n' I ain't surprised that Uncle 'Bijah got sot agin it. The language wa' n't sech as I 'd ben brought up to, either."

Lady Macbeth had leaned forward and was clasping her knees, thus unconsciously widening the expanse of pink gingham visible beneath the white robe. She was glad she had modified her Shakespeare to suit her listener, though "Out, *dreadful* spot!" was not nearly as blood-curdling as the original.

Miss Becky, meanwhile, had not paused in her narration.

"There was a long-winded young man," she was saying, "him that sarsed his girl, 'n' he went slashin' round, killin' folks off in a kind of an aimless way, an'——"

"It must have been *Hamlet* that you saw!" cried Nannie, much excited. "Oh, I *do* so want to see *Hamlet!*"

"Yes, *Hamlet;* that was it. And then there was a ghost in it that sent the shivers down my back; 'n' a king 'n' queen; 'n' the king looked for all the world like Deacon Ember, Jenny Lowe's grandpa, that died before you was born; 'n' I declare, I *did* enjoy it! 'T was jest like bein' alive in history times! Why, I ain't had sech shivers down my spine 's the ghost give me, sence that day, till I seen you standin' there tryin' to wash your hands without any water, 'n' your eyes rollin' fit to scare the cat!"

"Would you like to have me do it again for you, Miss Becky?" asked Nan, springing to her feet with renewed ardour. And straightway she stationed herself at the end of the little room and began propelling herself forward with occasional erratic halts.

The September sunshine came slanting through the tiny panes of glass at the window, and touched with impartial grace

the youthful figure of distracted mien, the worsted tidies on the haircloth sofa, and the neat alpaca occupant of the stuffed "rocker." Again the sewing was forgotten, and Miss Becky's glittering spectacles were fixed upon the tragic queen. As the queer little figure stalked solemnly down the room, eyes fixed in a glassy stare, hands wringing one another distressfully; as a moving wail rent the air, to the effect that "all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand," a most agreeable succession of shivers made a highway of Miss Becky's spine.

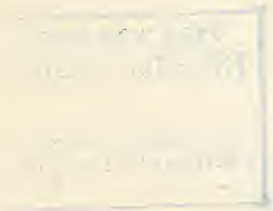
"Why don't you ever go to the theatre now, Miss Becky?" Nannie asked, when, having laid aside her tragic toggery, she came in her own person to take her leave. "I should think you'd like to go again."

"Oh, yes, I should be reel tickled to go again, but I ain't got nobody to go with, and, well—there 's other reasons besides."

Nannie blushed to think how inconsiderate she had been to force her old friend to allude, even indirectly, to her poverty,



"All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten
this little hand."



and she walked up the dusty road to her own gate, filled with compunction. Just outside the gate was a little wilderness of goldenrod and asters. She thought what a pity it was they should get so gray with dust. Poor things, they could not help it; they had to stay where chance had planted them unless somebody picked them and carried them away, and even then they left their roots behind them. Somehow they made her think of Miss Becky, living her little narrow, stationary life all alone in the old tumble-down farmhouse. And just at this point in her reflections a delightful scheme came into her head.

Now, Nannie was the recipient of a slender monthly allowance intended for gloves and ruchings, postage stamps, and the like, and, having spent the last four months far from the allurements of city shops, she happened at this juncture to be in funds. Her stock of gloves, to be sure, was pretty well exhausted, and Christmas was only a few months away. But Miss Becky was nearer still, and Nannie had no hesitation between the

two claims. As a natural consequence, it happened that, one pleasant day early in October, Miss Becky, in her best black bonnet, found herself steaming up to Boston, about to do Nannie "a real favour" by chaperoning her to the theatre. Miss Becky was so much impressed by the gravity of her responsibility that she hardly took in the fact that she was going to the theatre herself!

They were to see *The Shaughraun* —a play which her best friend had assured Nannie was "just great"; and as the train rushed up to town the young hostess was at a loss to decide whether she was happier on her own account or on Miss Becky's. To be sure, she was just a little disappointed about Miss Becky, who seemed curiously silent and stiff; and when they came out of the station and walked up the crowded city street, the old lady held her by the sleeve and looked bewildered and frightened.

"How long is it since you 've been in Boston?" Nannie asked, looking up into the anxious old face framed in the black

silk bonnet which looked twice as old-fashioned as ever before.

"Not sence Sophia was married 'n' we came up to select her weddin' gownd. I was quite a girl then, an' I guess I felt more at home in a crowd than I do now. We don't often hev much of a crowd out our way."

They were among the first to take their seats at the theatre. Mr. Ray had got places for them only three rows back from the stage, and, once established there, Nannie felt that they were in a safe haven, where her guest could grow calm and responsive again.

At first Miss Becky was almost too overawed to speak, but after a while she got the better of the situation and began telling Nannie all about Sophia and her "true-so," and how they got lost on their way to the station and almost missed their train, which was the only train "out" in old times.

"I do hope we sha'n't miss our train to-night, my dear! It doos seem 's though we might 'f they don't begin pretty soon,"

and the old lady—for a very old lady she seemed to have become all of a sudden—fidgeted in her chair, and looked over her shoulder to see if the seats were not filling up.

"We sha'n't lose our train, Miss Becky," Nannie assured her. "You know it does n't go until half-past five o'clock, and the play is always over before five. And even if we did miss it we could take the seven-fifteen."

"Oh, dear, no! I sh'd feel reel bad to miss the train. Why, it gits dark by six o'clock, 'n' 't would n't be safe for us to be goin' round the city streets after dark. We might git garroted or, or—*spoken to!* Dear me! I *wish* they would begin!"

"If it gets late, Miss Becky, we won't wait for the end of the play," said Nannie, while a very distinct pang seized her at thought of missing anything.

"I think that *would* be better!" Miss Becky cried, with evident relief. "Don't you think it might be better to go out a little early, anyway? They 'll be such a crowd when everybody tries to go out to

once that we might git delayed. *My!* what a sight of people there is already! And up in the galleries, too! Ain't you 'most afeared to stay in sech a crowd?"

"Oh, no, Miss Becky. It 's just like this always, and nothing ever happens."

"Them galleries don't look strong enough to hold many people. Why, Nannie, see! They ain't any *pillows* under 'em! What do you suppose keeps 'em up?"

"I don't know, I 'm sure; but they 're safe enough."

At this point the orchestra struck up a popular tune and silence fell upon Miss Becky. She sat, stiff and severe, gazing straight before her, and when Nannie ventured to make a remark she received only a reproving look in reply.

How strange it was, Nannie thought! She had meant to give Miss Becky such a treat, and here sat her guest, looking anxious and distressed—yes, more anxious and distressed than she looked a year ago when her cow died. But then the play had not begun yet, Nannie reflected, with a gleam of hope. When the play

had once begun, Miss Becky would forget all her worries and be as "tickled" as she had counted on her being. And when once the curtain had gone up, Nannie at least had no more misgivings. Her fancy was instantly taken captive, first by the charming young officer and his pretty Irish sweetheart, then by the fine old priest, then by Con himself,—dear, droll, happy-go-lucky Con, with his picturesque foibles, his bubbling humour, and his phenomenal virtues. From the moment of his entry, with "Tatters" just not at his heels, Nannie was all smiles and tears.

Miss Becky, meanwhile, sat erect as a ramrod, a look of perplexity screwing her wrinkles all out of shape. Her bonnet had got somewhat askew from her constant effort to keep an eye on those unsupported galleries, and there was a general air of discomfort about her, which was the first thing that struck Nannie when, as the curtain fell upon the first act, she turned to look at her.

"Are n't you enjoying it, Miss Becky?" she asked, with quick anxiety.

"Oh, yes, I 'm hevin' a reel pleasant time. 'T ain't through yet, is it?"

"Why, no; it 's only just begun. There 's lots more! May Colby says that Con gets them all out of all their troubles and almost gets killed himself!"

"I sh'd think 't would take a long time. Are you sure 't ain't most five o'clock?"

"Oh, no; it 's only three. See! And my watch is fast, too. Was n't it funny about the letter?"

"Well, I did n't quite understand about that. What made 'em laugh so?"

"Why, that was because he could n't read, and so he had to make it all up out of his head."

"Well!" declared Miss Becky, with strong disapproval, "I don't think he 'd ought to hev deceived his mother that way; do you?"

This was a poser; but at that moment the orchestra came to the rescue with a new tune, and Nannie was spared the necessity of replying.

After that the play became every moment more exciting and the central figure

more entirely captivating, and even between the acts Nannie was preoccupied and unobservant. They had got to the prison scene, with all its ingenious intricacies of plot and stage machinery; Con had accomplished the rescue, and was scrambling over the rocks, when suddenly the sharp report of a rifle rang out, followed by another, and then another, in quick succession.

Instantly Nannie felt her arm clutched, and she heard Miss Becky saying: "You must come right away, this very minute!"

"Oh, please not, Miss Becky," she implored.

But there was a resolute gleam in Miss Becky's eye.

"Come right along, child," she whispered, hoarsely, "come right along with me!"—and poor Nannie, to her consternation and chagrin, found herself absolutely obliged to follow.

The whole row of people stood up to let them pass, and every kind of look—glances of amusement and curiosity, of annoyance and of sympathy—followed the

oddly assorted pair, as they made their way out of the slip and then up the aisle.

Once outside the door, the tension of Miss Becky's face relaxed, but she did not waver in her determination.

"There, child!" she cried, as they walked down the slight incline of the long passageway to the street. "There! I am glad I had strength given me to do my duty by you!"

"But, Miss Becky, there was n't a bit of danger," Nannie protested, bravely keeping the tears back in her cruel disappointment. "Really, there was n't. Won't you *please* go back with me, and just stand inside the door and see the end of it? I 'm sure they 'd let us stand inside the door."

"Nannie Ray," Miss Becky replied, looking very fiercely at the girl's flushed cheeks and imploring eyes, "if you knew as much about firearms as I do, you would n't ask such a thing. But there! It 's jest because you 're young and inexperienced that your ma wanted me to come and look after you. I guess she 'll

be thankful she was so foresighted when she hears of the danger you was in."

In her exultation and relief of mind, Miss Becky marched on, regardless of jostling crowds and thronging teams. Her whole attitude had changed. She was no longer the timid, shrinking old woman; she was the responsible guardian, aware of the importance of her charge, and nothing was ever to convince her that she had not as good as saved Nannie's life on that occasion.

Then Nannie, as became a hostess, accepted the situation with the best grace in the world.

"I tell you what let 's do, Miss Becky," she said. "Let 's go and get some ice-cream. That is, if you like it."

The stern old face relaxed.

"Oh, yes; I like ice-cream, especially vanilla. But—do you think we 've got time enough?"

"We 've got an hour and a quarter before the train goes. Let 's come in here and get it."

From the crowded street they passed

in at the doorway and walked between marble counters to what seemed to Miss Becky a scene in fairyland. Ascending two or three broad steps, on each side of which an antlered stag kept guard, they stepped upon a great carpeted space, lighted from above,—a space in the middle of which was a fountain, springing high into the air, and splashing back into a round basin lined with shining shells and pebbles, over and among which goldfish swam and dove like animated jewels. Ferns and palms grew all about the basin, and in among the greenery was a little table where Nannie and her guest sat hidden safe away from the world.

"Well, this doos beat all!" the old lady exclaimed, gazing at the fountain with an expression of rapt delight—just the expression that Nannie had counted upon seeing among the wrinkles.

"Do you like it?" she asked, all her disappointment and chagrin forgotten.

"Like it? Why, it 's the most tasty place I was ever in! It 's better than any play; it 's like bein' in a play yourself!

Jest see them pillows supportin' that gallery! 'N' them picters of tropical fruits! 'N' this ice-cream! Why, it 's different from what we hev at the Sunday-school picnics! 'Pears to me it 's more creamy!"

Now, at last, Miss Becky had lost all thought of the passage of time. She took her ice-cream, just a little at a time, off the tip-end of her spoon, and with every mouthful the look of content grew deeper. One of the little cakes that were served with the ice-cream was a macaroon with a sugar swan upon it—"a reel little statoo of a swan," Miss Becky called it. She could not be persuaded to eat it, but she studied it with such undisguised admiration that Nannie ventured to suggest that she take it home with her. Again Miss Becky was enchanted. She wrapped it in her pocket-handkerchief, and placed it carefully in her reticule, whence it was to emerge only to enter upon a long and admired career as a parlour ornament.

"And now, Miss Becky," Nannie queried, as they sat there embowered in palms

and ferns, listening to the plash of the fountain, "did n't you enjoy the play at all?"

"Oh, yes," said Miss Becky, "I had a very pleasant time before they got so reckless with their guns. But—I wonder whether they take sech pains with the the-*ett*er 's they used to? Why, when I went with Uncle 'Bijah Lane that time, they all wore the most beautiful clothes. Even the men was dressed out in velvets and satins, and they wa'n't anybody on the stage that did n't make a good appearance."

"But, you know, this was a different sort of play, Miss Becky. The folks in *The Shaughraun* were n't kings and queens, but just every-day people."

"Well, s'posin' they was! I don't see no excuse for that man Con goin' round lookin' so slack. I sh'd think he might at least git a whole coat to wear when he 'pears before the public!"

"I 'm afraid you 're sorry you came," said Nannie, very meekly, feeling quite ashamed of her poor little party.

"Oh, no, I ain't! Why, child, I 'd hev

come *barefoot* to see this place here, with the founting a-splashin' and the fishes a-gleamin'! *Barefoot*, I tell ye!"

It was a forcible expression, yet Nannie was not quite reassured. She still demurred.

"But the play was the principal thing, you know."

"The play? Well, I don't know," said Miss Becky, thoughtfully. "I don't know 's I 'm so terrible sot on the the*ett*er 's I thought for. I 'd a good deal ruther hev you come over 'n do that sleep-walkin' piece for me. I don't want nothin' better 'n that. 'F I can see you act that once in a while, 'n' hev this here Garding of Eden to think about,—a founting playin' right in the house, 'n' all,—I ain't likely to want for amusement."

The best bonnet was still very much askew, but the pleasant old face within, whose wrinkles had resumed their accustomed grooves, was irradiated with a look of unmistakable beatitude; and somehow it was borne in upon Nannie that her theatre party had been a success after all.

Olivia's Sun-Dial

OLIVIA'S SUN-DIAL

"IT 'S all we need to make it the prettiest garden in Dunbridge."

"Hm! And why must we have the prettiest garden in Dunbridge?"

"Why should n't we?"

Here was a deadlock—a thing quite shockingly out of place in a garden, and one's own particular garden at that!

Olivia Page could make almost anything grow, as she had abundantly proved, but even her garden-craft could hardly suffice for the setting of a sun-dial on a pedestal of snow-white marble over there where the four triangular rose-beds converged to a circle, and where the south sun would play on it all day long.

For a year Olivia had dreamed of this, and, since she was not a churlishly reticent young person, it was not the first intima-

tion her father had received of her desire. Not until to-day, however, had she asked outright for what she wanted.

"I wish you would say something more," she remarked, glancing sidewise at the professor's deeply corrugated countenance, which, for all their intimacy, was sometimes difficult to decipher. She had heard of girls who could twist their parents round their fingers ; she wondered how they did it.

The two were sitting on the white half-circle of a bench that stood at the west boundary of the old tennis-court, just where one end of the net used to be staked up. Excepting for that break, three sides of the garden were fenced in by the high wire screen originally designed to keep the tennis balls within bounds, and now doing duty as a trellis over which a luxuriant woodbine clambered, waving its reddening tendrils in the light September breeze. Wide flower-beds bordered the entire court, the central turf being broken only by the cluster of rose-beds at the further end. From the

white bench one looked across the grass to a broad flight of veranda steps, flanked on the right by a mass of white boltonia, while on the left a superb growth of New England asters reared their sturdy heads.

The garden had been a great success this year, quite the admiration of the neighbourhood. Really, Papa must be proud of it, and it was all Olivia's doing. Who would ever guess that it had had its modest beginnings in half a dozen tin cracker-boxes with holes bored in the bottoms, where, in March, two years ago, she had planted queer little brown seeds as hard as pebbles, which Nature had straightway taken in hand, softening and expanding them down there in the dark, till they came alive, and began feeling their way up to meet the sun. Ah, the bliss of seeing those first tiny shoots turn into stems and leaflets, ready to play their part in the great spring awakening! Would Olivia ever love any flowers quite as she had loved those first seedlings, especially a certain pentstemon, which

blossomed "white with purple spots," exactly as the seed-catalogue had promised?

Yes, the garden was a great success, and just now it was at one of its prettiest moments, gay with autumn colours; the rudbeckia in its glory, and the great pink blossoms of the hibiscus spreading their skirts for all the world like ladies in an old-time minuet, while over yonder the soldier spikes of the flame-flower threatened to set the woodbine afire. Olivia loved the Latin names, but somehow "tritonia" did not seem to express those spikes of burning colour. And the roses! How lovely those late hybrids were! Why, the way that Margaret Dickson drooped her head above the pansies, still blooming freely at her feet, was enough to melt the heart of a Salem gibraltar! A pity that the professor's attention seemed for the moment to be riveted upon the toe of his boot!

"I wish you would say something more," Olivia repeated.

"Something different, you mean," and Doctor Page smiled, benignly and stubbornly.

"For instance, you might tell me why you are opposed to it."

"You would n't understand."

"I might; you said, only the other day, that I sometimes displayed almost human intelligence!"

The professor liked to have his jokes remembered; but still he seemed inclined to temporise.

"I might say that we could n't afford it. It is generally conceded that Alma Mater is not a munificent provider."

"Yes; and you might say that my great-grandfather was not an East India trader —only you don't tell fibs."

"Or that a sun-dial is an anachronism."

"You are too good a Latin scholar for that."

"So a subterfuge won't do? Very well; then you 'll have to put up with a psychological proposition."

"How interesting!"

The professor glanced at the expectant young face turned toward him, and he could not but admit that his estimate of its owner's intelligence had been well within the truth.

"You think a sun-dial would make it the prettiest garden in Dunbridge?"

"I 'm sure it would."

"And that is what you are aiming at?"

"Yes."

"Now, I have noticed that when you have got what you are aiming at you lose interest in it."

"O Papa!"

"There was tennis," he went on, marking off the list on a combative forefinger, "and cookery; there was the Polyglot Club, and the Sketching Club, and ——"

"But, Papa! They were every one of them good things, and I got a lot out of them; truly, I did."

"No doubt; but as soon as you could play tennis, or sketch a pine tree, or toss an omelette a little better than the other girls, you had squeezed your orange dry."

"But, Papa! I 've stuck to gardening for more than two years!" Olivia's tone seemed to give those years the dignity of centuries.

"True; but you have n't got your sun-dial. You will consider that the finish-

ing touch, and then before we know it you will be wanting to turn the whole thing into a sand-garden for the little micks at the Corners."

"Not such a bad idea," Olivia admitted unguardedly.

"There you are! The mere mention of a new scheme is enough to set you agog!"

But this was not their first fencing match, and Olivia had learned to parry.

"I thought you believed in people being open-minded," she ventured demurely.

"And so I do; but not so open-minded that for every new idea that comes in an old one goes out."

"Oh, the sun-dial has n't got away yet," she laughed, springing to her feet and going over to the court-end of the garden, where she placed herself in the exact centre of the converging rose-beds.

"There!" she cried; "don't you see how my white gown lights up the whole place? It 's just the high light that it needs."

And so it was: a fact of which no one

was better aware than the professor. As he, too, rose and sauntered toward the house he could not deny that Olivia's ideas were usually good. The only trouble was that she had too many of them; and here was the kernel of truth that gave substance to his whimsical argument. The beauty of the garden was not lost upon him, nor yet the skill and industry of the young gardener. But more important than either was the advantage to the girl's health. Olivia was sound as a nut; of course she was! There could be no doubt of that. But—so had her mother seemed, until that fatal winter ten years ago. He did not fear for Olivia; why should he? Only—well, this out-of-door life was a capital thing for anybody. No, he could not have her tire of her garden.

At the foot of the veranda steps Dr. Page paused and glanced again at his daughter. She had left the rose-beds and was already intent upon her work, pulling seeds from the hollyhocks over yonder. She made a pretty picture in her white

gown, standing shoulder-high among the brown stalks, her slender fingers deftly gleaning from such as showed no rust. The child was really very persistent about her gardening; she had fairly earned an indulgence. Perhaps, after all, she might be trusted. He moved a few steps toward her.

"Olivia," he said,—and the first word betrayed his relenting,—"Olivia, your sun-dial scheme is not such a bad idea. I should rather like that white-petticoat effect myself. Supposing we say that if between now and next June you don't think of anything you want more, we 'll have it."

"Oh, you blessèd angel! What could I want more?"

"Time will show," the blessèd angel replied, retracing his steps toward the house —unaided by angelic wings!

"Yes," Olivia called confidently. "It 's the sun-dial that time will show, and afterward — why, the sun-dial will show the time!"—and although he made no sign, she knew there were little puckers

of amused approval about her father's mouth.

As if she could ever want anything more than a sun-dial! she thought, while she passed along the borders, harvesting her little crop. She had finished with the hollyhocks, and now she was bending over a bed of withered columbines. And there were the foxglove seeds still clinging. Really, it was almost impossible to keep up. How brilliant the salvia was to-day, and what a brave second blossoming that was of the delphinium, its knightly spurs, metallic blue, gleaming in the sun!

"No," she declared to herself, "there will never be anything so much worth while as the garden. Why, of course there won't; because Nature is the best thing in the world—the very best."

"Plase, ma'am, will ye gimme a bowkay?"

Olivia turned, startled by a voice so near at hand, for she had heard no footfall on the thick turf. There, in the centre of the grass-grown space, stood two comical little midgets, their smutty yet cherubic



" Please ma'am, will ye gimme a bowkay ? "

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faces blooming brightly above garments highly coloured and earthy, too, as the autumn garden-beds.

"Dear me!" Olivia laughed, "how things do sprout in a garden! Did you come right up out of the ground?"

"Plase, ma'am, a bowkay! Me mudder 's sick an' me fader 's goned away."

The speaker, a boy of five, stood holding by the hand something in the way of a sister, about two sizes smaller. At Olivia's little joke, which they did not in the least understand, they had both grinned sympathetically, showing rows of diminutive teeth as white and even as snow-berries.

"Bless your little hearts, of course you shall have a bouquet! Come and choose one,"—and taking a hand of each Olivia led them slowly along the brilliant borders.

They were a bit shy at first, but they soon picked up their courage, and Patsy fell to accumulating a mass of incongruous blossoms whose colours fought each other tooth and nail. Little Biddy, more modest, as beseemed her inferior rank in

the scale of being, fixed her heart upon a single flame-flower which absolutely refused to reconcile itself with the ingenuous pink of her calico frock.

"How long has your mother been ill?" Olivia asked of the boy, who by this time was quite hidden behind a perfect forest of asters and larkspur and lobelia cardinalis.

"Me mudder 's always sick. She coughs an' coughs, and den she lays on de bed long whiles."

"And she likes flowers?"

"Yes, ma'am; me an' Biddy picked a bowkay outen a ashba'l oncet, an' me mudder sticked it in a tumbler an' loved it. Come, Biddy, make de lady a bow!" Upon which the small Chesterfield stood off a few steps and gave an absurd little bob of a bow which Biddy gravely endeavoured to imitate.

"I think I 'll go with you," said Olivia, open-minded as ever to a new interest; and hand in hand and chattering amicably, the three moved across the turf and down the long gravel walk to the dusty street. Surprising how short the distance was be-

tween the sweet seclusion of the old tennis-court and the squalid quarter where these little human blossoms grew!

Olivia was thinking of that as she stood on the veranda an hour later, looking down upon the flowery kingdom to which all her interest and ambition had been pledged. Yes, it was lovely, lovely in the long afternoon light, and it would have been lovelier still with the gleaming marble she had dreamed of. She really tried to keep her mind upon it, to forget the little drama over there in the stuffy tenement. But no; she was too good a gardener for that. Was not a whole family broken and wilting for lack of means to transplant it?

The doctor had ordered Mrs. O'Trannon to Colorado, and Mike had dropped his work as "finisher"—whatever that might be—and had gone out to prepare the way for the others to follow. He had found no chance to work at his trade, but he had got a job on a ranch, where the pay was small, but the living good. A fine place it would be for the invalid and the children, when once he could get together

the money to send for them. But meanwhile here they were, and the winter coming on.

As Olivia stood looking down upon her beloved garden, she could not seem to see anything but brown stalks and dead blossoms. All that lavish colour looked fictitious and transitory; she had somehow lost faith in it.

Mrs. O'Trannon had been pleased with the flowers; she had grown up on a farm, she said. Sure she never 'd ha' got sick at all if she 'd ha' stayed where she belonged. But then, where would Mike have been, and the babies? And where would Mike be, and the babies, Olivia thought with a pang,—where would they be if the mother wilted and died? She turned, suddenly, and passed in at the glass doors and on to her father's study.

At sight of the kind, quizzical face lifted at her entrance, Olivia winced a bit. About an hour and a half it must be, since he said it, and he had given her a year! As if that made any difference! she told herself, with a little defiant movement of

the chin, as she crossed the room and seated herself at the opposite side of the big writing-table where she could face the music handsomely.

"Well, Olivia; changed your mind yet?" the professor inquired, struck, perhaps, by the resolution of her aspect.

"Yes," she answered, in an impressive tone, "I've thought of something I should prefer to a sun-dial."

Dr. Page took off his glasses and laid them upon his open book. He did not really imagine that she was serious—such a turn-about-face was too precipitate even for Olivia; but it pleased him to meet her on her own ground.

"And what is it this time? A sixty-inch telescope? Or a diamond tiara?"

"Well, no. Those are things I had not thought of—before! It's a kind of gardening project—a little matter of transplanting."

"Will it cost a hundred and fifty dollars?"

"About that, I should think, to do it properly and comfortably. And—it can't

wait till June. It 's the kind of transplanting that has to be done in the autumn."

Then, dropping the little fiction, and resting her chin upon her folded hands, the better to transfix her father's mocking countenance,—" Papa," she said, " there 's a poor family down at the Corners,—our neighbours, you know,—and the mother is dying for want of transplanting, just like the beautiful hydrangea—you remember ?—that I did n't understand about till it was too late. I never knew what too late meant, till I saw that splendid great bush lying stone-dead on the ground when we came home from the Adirondacks last year. A great healthy hydrangea dying just for lack of the right kind of soil ! And now, here is this good human woman, that might live out her life and bring up her little family, and be happy and useful for years to come. Such a nice woman she must be to name her babies Patsy and Biddy, when she might have called them Algernon and Celestina, you know, and just spoiled it all !—and such a nice, kind husband to take care of her on a big ranch

where there 's good air, and lots to eat, and plenty of work and not too much, and— why Papa! they might have a garden out there! who knows? What a thing that would be for the prairie! A real New England garden!"

"With a sun-dial?" the professor interposed.

For an instant Olivia's face fell, but only for an instant.

"I 've been thinking," she said, with a very convincing seriousness, "that perhaps a sun-dial is not so important, after all. At any rate it 's not so important as the mother of a family; now, is it, Papa?"

"That depends upon the point of view," the professor opined. "As a high light among the rose-bushes I should be constrained to give my vote for the sun-dial."

Olivia sprang to her feet.

"That means that you are coming straight over with me to see Mrs. O'Trannon," she cried, "and that you are going to have the whole family packed off to Colorado quicker 'n a wink! Come along,

please! There 's plenty of time before dinner!"

.

"It 's just another of Nature's miracles!" Olivia observed, as she and her father stood one morning in late October watching the workmen pack the sods about the beautiful pedestal, now securely planted upon its base of cement and broken stone. "It always makes me think of the wonderful things that came up in those tin cracker-boxes you used to make such fun of. There really does n't seem to be any place too unlikely for Nature to set things going in."

The marble was but roughly hewn, in lines that held the suggestion of an hour-glass. The top only was smoothly finished, while here and there on the curving sides the hint of a leaf, a blossom, a trailing vine, came and went with the point of view, like cloud-pictures or the pencillings of Jack Frost. It was as if a 'prentice-hand had tried to express the soul of an artist, too self-distrustful to work more boldly.

"Funny, how things come into your head," Olivia went on. "Do you know, Papa, that day when I was helping Mrs. O'Trannon with her preposterous packing and suddenly came upon this miracle hidden away under an old bedquilt, the only thing I could think of was the way my first pentstemons came out, 'white with purple spots,' exactly as I had chosen them by the seed-catalogue. And to think that she had bought it for a dollar of that poor stone-cutter's widow that was moving out—bought it to make pastry on because the top was smooth and cold! And then had never had time to make but one pie in the three years! I wish you could have heard her tell about it. 'Faith, it cost me a dollar, me one pie did, an' Mike says it 's lucky it was that I did n't make a dozen whin they come so high! Silly b'y, that Mike!' O Papa, is n't it heavenly that they 're together again?"

"So you think there is nothing Nature can't do?" Dr. Page mused, with apparent irrelevance. "How about the sun-dial itself?"

"Oh, Nature will attend to that, too."

"She will, will she? And in what particular tin cracker-box should you look for it to come up?"

"It would n't be polite to say," Olivia declared, looking with unmistakable significance straight into her father's face.

"Saucebox!" he chuckled.

And when, in early June, the brass disk of the sun-dial had begun its record of happy hours, and still Olivia toiled with unabated zeal at her garden, the rose of health blooming ever brighter in her face, a great sense of satisfaction and approval took possession of her father's mind. But he only remarked, in a casual manner, as they sat together on the white bench one fragrant sunset hour:

"After all, I 'm not sure but Nature's biggest miracle has been performed in the saucebox."

And Olivia, smiling softly, answered: "I told you, you know, that there is n't any place too unlikely for Nature to set things going in!"

Bagging a Grandfather

BAGGING A GRANDFATHER

"I'LL warrant that 'he, she, or it' will come! Di usually bags her game!"

The speaker, Mr. Thomas Crosby, must have had implicit faith in his daughter's prowess to venture such a confident assertion as that, for he was quite in the dark as to who "he, she, or it" might be.

It was a cozy November evening, when open fires and friendly drop-lights are in order, and the three grown-folks of the family were enjoying these luxuries. Mr. Crosby was supposed to be reading his paper, but he had a sociable way of letting fall an occasional item of interest, or of letting fall the paper itself, at the first hint of interest in the remarks of his wife and daughter.

Only within a very short time had there been three grown-folks in the family,

unless, indeed, we count Rollo, the Gordon setter, who had attained his majority years ago. Di, who was but just turned sixteen, really did not like to remember how very recently she had been sent to bed at eight o'clock!

Could Mr. Crosby have guessed the scheme which was occupying the active brain of the young person engaged in embroidering harmless bachelor's buttons upon a linen centrepiece, he would have been very much astonished, — whether pleasurably or otherwise, events alone must show. And since events had been taken in hand by Di the revelation was not likely to be long delayed.

The incident which had elicited her father's declaration of confidence was a request on Di's part to be allowed the privilege of inviting a guest of her own choosing to the Thanksgiving dinner. The family party was to be materially reduced this year, for Mrs. Crosby's mother and sister, their only available relatives, were at that moment sojourning in Rome, where, if they were sufficiently

mindful of current maxims to do as the Romans do, they were very unlikely to meet with any satisfactory combination of turkey and plum-pudding. It was with that fact in view, that Di felt a fair degree of assurance in preferring her request. They all liked each other, of course, better than they liked anybody else, but, really, one must do something a little out of the common on Thanksgiving day.

"Certainly," Di's mother had agreed; "you shall invite any one you choose. I have been wishing we could think of some one to ask, but people all have their own family parties on Thanksgiving day. Is it to be one of your girl friends?"

"That is my secret," Di had replied, sedately; "but, whoever it is, he, she, or it is a very important personage, and will have to be treated with great consideration!"

"And how is that very *un*important personage, Di Crosby, going to get hold of so great a dignitary?" Mrs. Crosby had laughingly inquired. At which

juncture Mr. Crosby had expressed his belief that Di would bag her game.

That the prospective dinner should be incomplete was all the harder, considering the fact that the Crosbys were, by good rights, the possessors of that most desired ornament of such an occasion,—a *bona fide* grandfather. Not only was old Mr. Crosby living, and in excellent health, but his residence was not above a dozen blocks removed from his son's house. And yet no grandfather had ever graced their Thanksgiving feast.

Family quarrels are an unpleasant subject at the best, and since Di herself had never learned the precise cause of the long estrangement between father and son, in which the old gentleman had decreed that his son's wife and children should share, it is hardly worth while to recount it here. Suffice it to say, that it was a very old quarrel indeed, older than Di herself, and one to which Mr. and Mrs. Crosby never alluded.

It was six years ago, when Di, the eldest of the children, was ten years of age, that

she had come home from school one day, breathless with excitement.

"Mamma!" she cried, bursting into the room where her mother was changing the baby's frock: "Mamma! Have I got a grandfather?"

Mrs. Crosby glanced furtively at the round eyes of the baby, and took the precaution of smothering him in billows of white lawn before replying, rather softly: "Yes, dear; Papa's father is living. Why do you ask?"

"I saw him to-day."

"You saw him? Where?"

"On the street."

"How did you know it was he?"

"Sallie Watson asked me why I did n't bow to my grandfather."

"And what did you say?"

"I said: 'Never you mind!' And then I ran home all the way, as tight as ever I could run! Mamma, why do n't we ever see him?"

The baby's head was just emerging from temporary eclipse, and Mrs. Crosby's voice dropped still lower, as she answered:

"Because, dear, *he does n't wish it.*"

There was something so gently conclusive in this answer that little Di was silenced. Yet the look in her mother's face had not escaped her; a wistful, hurt look, such as the child had never seen there before. And in her own mind Di asked many questions.

What did it all mean? How did it happen that her grandfather did not wish it? Why was he so different from other girls' grandfathers? There must be something very wrong somewhere, but where was it? Since it could not possibly be with her father or mother, it must be that her grandfather was himself at fault.

The object of Di's perplexities, Mr. Horatio Crosby, lived all alone in a very good house, and was in the habit of driving about in a very pretty victoria; people bowed to him, people who were friends of Di's father and mother, and must therefore be creditable acquaintances. All this she soon discovered, for, having once come to know her grandfather by sight,

she seemed to be constantly crossing his path.

Little by little, as she grew older, Di picked up certain stray bits of information, but she never tried to piece them together. She felt that she would a little rather not know any more. A quarrel there had certainly been, some time in the dark ages before she was born, and the old man had proved himself obstinate and implacable. Friendly overtures had been made from time to time, but he had set his face against all such advances, and now, for many, many years,—as many as three or four, little Di had gathered,—the friendly overtures had ceased.

One gets used to things, and Di got used to having a grandfather who did not know her by sight. She was sure he did not know her, because once, when she was twelve years old, he had stopped her on the street to tell her that she had dropped her pocket-handkerchief. It had been very polite of the old gentleman, and she had been glad not to lose her handkerchief. Yet, as she thanked him, she gave

him one searching look, and she told herself that he had a very cross expression, as well as a very harsh voice.

This uncomplimentary verdict was largely due to the fact that, at this period, Di had quite made up her mind that her grandfather was a hateful, unreasonable old despot, and that it served him right never to come to the family parties, nor to have any Christmas presents, nor to have seen the baby, which Mamma said was the prettiest of all her babies, and which Di considered the most enchanting object on the face of the earth.

But again many years had passed,—four, in this instance,—and there came a time, only a few weeks previous to the opening of our story, when Di found herself constrained to modify her view of her grandfather.

It happened that she had gone with her drawing teacher, Miss Downs, to an exhibition of paintings. Among the pictures was a very striking one entitled *Le Grandpère.* It represented an old French peasant, just stopping off work for the

day, with a flock of grandchildren clinging about his knees. Miss Downs called Di's attention to the wonderful reach of upland meadow, and the exquisite effect of the sunset light on the face of the old man; but, to Di, the meadow and the sunset light were unimportant accessories to the central idea. It was the grandfather himself that commanded all her attention,—the look of blissful indulgence on the old man's face; his attitude of protecting affection towards one young girl in particular, on whose head the toil-stained hand rested.

"Yes," she said, after several minutes of rapt contemplation: "Yes; the sunset is very nice, and the fields; but, oh, the old man is such a darling!"

As she spoke she turned to see how her teacher took her remark, and found herself face to face, not with Miss Downs, but with her own grandfather! She gave a little gasp of surprise, which he appeared not to notice.

"So you think him a darling, do you?" he asked, and somehow his voice did not

sound quite as harsh as it had done four years ago.

Miss Downs had passed on, and there was no one standing near them, no one at all in the gallery who shared Di's knowledge of the strange situation. She felt sure that the old man had no suspicion of her identity.

"Yes, I do," she answered boldly.

"What makes a darling of him?" the old gentleman inquired.

Di felt that this was her opportunity, and that she was letting it slip. But she could not help herself, and she only answered rather lamely:

"Oh, nothing, except that he is *such a good grandfather!*" Upon which she beat a hasty retreat, and fled to the protection of Miss Downs, whom she found in an adjoining room.

It was perhaps twenty minutes later that Di and her teacher passed the picture again, and, behold, there was the old gentleman standing, lost in thought, exactly on the spot where she had left him. He did not seem to be looking at the

picture, but Di felt certain that he was thinking of it. And, suddenly, it passed through her mind like a flash that he was sorry.

"Yes; he 's sorry," she said to herself. "He 's sorry, and he does n't know how to say so!"

The more she thought of it in the days that followed,—and she seemed to be thinking pretty much all the time of the old man and the look on his face as he stood before the picture,—the more convinced she became that he was sorry and did not know how to say so.

"And he ought not to have to say so," she told herself. "He 's an old, old man, and he ought not to have to say that he is sorry."

The old, old man—aged sixty-five—might have taken exception to that part of her proposition touching his extreme antiquity, but we may be pretty sure that he would have cordially endorsed her opinion that the dignity of his years forbade his saying that he was sorry.

In those days Di used to walk often

past her grandfather's house. It was a very big house for a single occupant. Even the stout footman, whom she had once seen at the door, did not seem stout enough, nor numerous enough to relieve the big house of its vacancy. There were heavy woollen draperies in the parlor windows, but not a hint of the pretty white muslin which a woman would have had up in no time. Once she passed the house just at dusk, after the lights were lighted. Through the long windows she looked into the empty room. Not so much as a cat or a dog was awaiting the master. In the swift glance with which she swept the interior she noted that the fireplace was boarded in. That seemed to Di indescribably dreary. Perhaps her grandfather did not sit here; perhaps he had a library somewhere, like their own. But, no; there was the portly footman entering with the evening paper, which he laid upon the table before coming to close the shutters.

"He 's too old to say he is sorry," Di said to herself, as she turned dejectedly

away; "a great deal too old—and lonely —and dreary!"

And it was on that very evening that she made her little petition to her mother, and that her father declared that Di was sure to bag her game.

Old Mr. Crosby, meanwhile, was too well-used to his empty house and to his boarded-in fireplace to mind them very much, too unaccustomed to muslin curtains to miss them. Yet he had not been on very good terms with himself for the past few weeks, and that was something which he did mind particularly.

The result of his long cogitation in front of the grandfather picture had been highly uncomplimentary to the artist. He pronounced the homespun subject unworthy of artistic treatment, and he told himself that it merited just that order of criticism which it had received at the hands of the young person with the rather pretty turn of countenance, who had regarded it with such enthusiasm. Nevertheless, he did not forget the picture,—nor yet the young person!

It was the afternoon of Thanksgiving day, and there was a light fall of snow outside. He remembered that in old times there used always to be a lot of snow on Thanksgiving day. Things were very different in old times. He wondered what would have been thought of a man fifty years ago,—or seventeen years ago, for the matter of that,—who was giving his servants a holiday and dining at the club. As if those foreign servants had any concern in the Yankee festival! But then, what concern had he, Horatio Crosby, in it nowadays? What had he to be thankful for? Whom had he to be thankful with? He was very lucky to have a club to go to! He might as well go now, though it was still two or three hours to dinner time. He would ring for his overcoat and snow-shoes.

His hand was on the bell-rope—for Mr. Horatio Crosby was old-fashioned, and had never yet admitted an electric button to his domain.

At that moment the door opened softly —what was Burns thinking of, not to

knock?—and there stood, not Burns, not Nora, but a slender apparition in petticoats, with a dash of snow on hat and jacket, and a dash of daring in a pair of very bright eyes.

"Good afternoon, Grandfather," was the apparition's cheerful greeting, and involuntarily the old gentleman found himself replying with a "Good afternoon" of his own.

The apparition moved swiftly forward, and, before he knew what he was about, an unmistakable kiss had got itself applied to his countenance and—more amazing still—he was strongly of the impression that there had been—no robbery!

Greatly agitated by so unusual an experience, he only managed to say: "So you are ——?"

"Yes; I am Di Crosby,—your granddaughter, you know, and—this is Thanksgiving day!"

"You don't say so!" and the old man gazed down at her in growing trepidation.

"Let 's sit down," Di suggested, feeling that she gained every point that

her adversary lost. "This must be your chair. And I 'll sit here. There! Is n't this cozy?"

"Oh, very!"

The master of the house had sufficiently recovered himself to put on his spectacles, the use of which was affording him much satisfaction. He really did not know that the young girl of the day was so pretty!

"I don't suppose you smoke a pipe," Di remarked, in a strictly conversational tone.

"Well, no; I can't say I do. Why?"

"I only thought I should like to light one for you. You know," she added, confidentially, "girls always light their grandfathers' pipes in books. And I 've had so little practice in that sort of thing!"

"In pipes?"

"No—in grandfathers!"

There came a pause, occupied, on Di's part, by a swift, not altogether approving survey of the stiff, high-studded room. This time it was the old gentleman who broke the silence.

"I believe you are the young lady who



"'Good afternoon, Grandfather,' was the apparition's cheerful greeting."

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admired that old clodhopper in the picture," he remarked.

"Oh, yes; he was a great darling!"

"He was n't very handsome."

"No, but—there is always something so dear about a grandfather!"

"Always?"

"Yes; always!" and suddenly Di left her seat, and, taking a few steps forward, she dropped on her knees before him.

"Grandfather," she said, clasping her small gloved hands on his knee, "Grandfather!"

She was meaning to be very eloquent indeed, — that is, if it were to become necessary. She did not dream that that one word, so persuasively spoken, was more eloquent than a whole oration.

"Well, Miss Di?"

"Grandfather, I 've a great favour to ask of you, and I should like to have you say 'yes' beforehand!"

He looked down upon her with a heart rendered surprisingly soft by that first word,—and a mind much tickled by the audacity of the rest of it.

"And are you in the habit of getting favours granted in the dark?" he inquired.

"Papa says I usually bag my game!"

Now old Mr. Crosby had been a sportsman in his day, and he was mightily pleased with the little jest. But he only asked:

"And what 's your game in this instance, if you please?"

"You!"

"Oh, I! And you want to bag me? Bag me for what?"

"For dinner!"

"Oh, for dinner!"

"Yes! We are all by ourselves to-day, and you 'll just make the table even. There 's only Papa and Mamma, and Louise, and Beth, and Alice, and the baby." Somehow the succession of sweet, soft names sounded very attractive to the crabbed old man.

"The baby is six years old," Di continued, unconsciously adding another touch to the attractiveness of the picture.

"And what is her name?"

"*His* name is Horatio. I never liked it very well; it seemed too long for a

baby. But, do you know?—I think I shall like it better now."

She was still kneeling before him, with her small gloved hands clasped on his knee. It was clear that she had not the faintest idea of being refused. Yet even had she been somewhat less confident, she might well have taken heart of hope, for, at this point, he gently laid his wrinkled hand upon hers.

"You *will* come to dinner?" she begged, apparently quite unconscious of the little caress. "We dine at five on Thanksgiving day, and you and I can walk over together. They will all be so surprised, —and so happy!"

"Then they are not expecting me?" and the old man gave her a very piercing look, which did not seem to pierce at all.

"No; they did n't know who it was to be. I only said it was a very important personage."

"Coming in a bag!" he suggested.

"Oh, that 's only a sportsman's expression!"

"Indeed! And is it customary nowa-

days to go a-hunting for your Thanksgiving dinner?"

Di's eyes danced. This was indeed a grandfather worth waiting for! But she only answered demurely:

"That depends upon your quarry!"

Lucky Di, to have hit upon that pretty, old-fashioned word! She had, indeed, read her Sir Walter to good purpose.

Now, Mr. Horatio Crosby had held out stoutly against every appeal of natural affection, of reason, of conscience. He was not a quick-tempered man like his son; he was not, like his daughter-in-law, easily rebuffed; but there was about him a toughness of fibre which yielded neither to blows nor to pressure, and which, for many years, neither friend nor foe had penetrated. And here was this young thing simply ignoring the hitherto impenetrable barrier! The clear young eyes looked straight through it, the fresh young voice made nothing of it, the playful fancies overleapt it. A quarry, indeed! Where had the child got hold of the word?

Of a sudden the old man bent forward and lightly touched the laughing face in token of surrender.

"It 's an old bird you 've winged, little girl," he said, as he rose to his feet and stepped once more to the bell-rope; and this time he really rang for his coat and overshoes.

.

"And so you 've named this little chap Horatio?"

Dinner was over, — a very pleasant, natural kind of dinner, too, in spite of the difficulty some of the family had found in eating it,—and they were all gathered about a roaring woodfire, fortifying themselves, with the aid of coffee, cigars, and chocolate-drops, — each according to his kind, — for a game of blind-man's-buff. The small scion of the house was seated on his grandfather's knee, playing with his grandfather's fob, after the immemorial habit of small scions.

"Of course we named him Horatio!" It was Mrs. Crosby who answered, and,

as her father-in-law looked across at her face with the firelight playing upon it, he seemed to remember that he had always wished for a daughter.

"And what do you call him for short?"

"Just Horatio!" piped up little Alice, who was sitting on the rug at the old gentleman's feet, gently pulling Rollo's long-suffering ears.

"Yes," said Mr. Thomas Crosby; "we have always been proud of the name."

Then Di, perceiving a slight unsteadiness in the voice in which this was said, stepped behind her grandfather's chair, and, dropping a small kiss on the top of his head, looked across at her father, and exclaimed:

"Oh, Papa! To thing of our having bagged a grandfather!"

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